

May  
1994

# INTERREGNUM

# 3



*fantasy roleplaying and more*



# INTERREGNUM

## #3

*An Amateur Press Association  
covering fantasy roleplaying games  
and anything that interests those who play them.*

Peter Maranci, ed.

Topic: "Dreams"

May 1994

Interregnum is an Amateur Publishing Association, comprised of zines written by individual contributors and mailed to the editor. It is collated and published approximately twelve times per year. **New contributors and subscribers are always welcome.**

A subscription costs \$2.00 per issue plus the actual cost of the selected method of mailing. Subscribers may open an account from which these costs are deducted by mailing a check or money order in US funds, payable to Peter Maranci, at the following address:

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Since Interregnum is an amateur production, it is necessary for contributors to help cover the costs of production: \$2 per single-sided master page mailed in. Alternatively, contributors may mail 55 good double-sided copies of their zine to the editor. The only additional cost to contributors is the price of the postage to mail their issue to them.

All zines sent in for publication in Interregnum should be copyrighted by the author. Copyright may be asserted by the use of the following phrase:

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## publication schedule:

⇒ The deadline for inclusion in Interregnum #4 is June 30th. The deadline for Interregnum #5 is August 3rd.

⇒ The topic for Interregnum #4 is *Technology*. Aspects of technology can be found in every genre, from cyberpunk to sword & sorcery—after all, swords don't appear by magic (well, not very often). In some game worlds magic itself can be a kind of technology. Any stories, ideas?



It's a surprisingly slim issue this month. I say *surprisingly* because just a couple of weeks ago it seemed that this was likely to be the largest issue of Interregnum yet; instead, it's by far the smallest (as of this writing; perhaps a fairy zinemother will show up at the very last moment). ☺

I've found that editing an APA is a learning process. The lesson to be learned in this case is: pester, nag, and remind contributors non-stop for zines! ☺ Seriously, I will make sure to remind everyone about the deadlines frequently from now on.

Time seems to fly during the warm months; can we really be at issue #3 already? It's hard to believe, but undeniably true. The monthly publishing schedule contributes to the feeling of speed, I suspect.

\* It's possible that some may wonder about the details of how Interregnum is produced (note that I said *possible*, not *likely*☺). It's a simple process, overall: The title page, editorial page(s), and cover are formatted for desktop publication using Publish-It 4.0 for Windows somewhat in advance of the deadline. Blank spaces for art are included in the layout. The documents are then printed to disk as encapsulated PostScript files.

The EPS files are then copied onto floppies and printed at any one of several local self-service laser-printing services; this costs fifty cents per page plus the rental time for the computer. The computers themselves are usually DOS machines, but the Macintosh Downloader program is also usable; unfortunately it's also fairly rare.

Laser printing is actually the most time-consuming part of the process, since it requires a drive of some distance and five minutes or more per page to print. If I were to scan my clipart and include it as graphics in the EPS files the time required for printout would rise to ten minutes or more per page. Expensive.

However, I don't usually use computer graphics. Instead, I search through the 15,000+ clipart images in the collection of Dover books I've amassed, and select the images that best seem to fit. The art is then photocopied, reduced or enlarged as needs be, cut out, and taped onto the blank spots in the laser-printed originals. The originals are then copied once, and the resulting copies are used to create the rest of the print run.

The covers are copied separately, onto cardstock. The whole thing is then collated and stapled at my house. The labels are printed, the copies put into envelopes, and the whole thing is mailed the next business day.

The world of amateur roleplaying publishing lost a major figure in May: **Glenn Blacow**, co-creator of The Wild Hunt APA and sometime contributor to Alarums & Excursions, passed away after a long illness. He will be missed.

\* Letters to the Editor will be gladly received, and printed in the editorial section. No letter will be published, however, that is marked as not for publication. Obviously it is important for correspondents to mark that information clearly!

\* Postage: After long hours spent calling the Post Office, I'm informed that APAs are not properly mailable via 4th class mail (Book Rate). Third class is an option. However, the price difference between 4th class and 1st is small (\$0.62); I suspect that the difference between 3rd class and 1st, compared to the delivery time, makes the use of 3rd class pointless.

However, I'll use whatever legal form of mailing is desired. Please let me know what you'd prefer.

Those who requested that their copies be mailed book rate have been charged the cost of book rate for Interregnum #1 and #2, but should let me know how they want future issues to be mailed.

\* **Margin of Error:** Zines should be printed with at least a 3/4 inch margin on the binding side—the left side for odd-numbered pages, and the right side for even-numbered pages. A full one-inch margin is preferable. The margins on the opposite sides should be at least 1/2 inch wide, as should the top and bottom margins.

\* This may be hard to explain, but it's helpful if zines have an even number of pages. Though the master copies are (and should be) single-sided, the copies are made double-sided. Unfortunately an odd number of pages in a zine makes it necessary to insert a blank page after the final one, in order to avoid throwing all following zines out of order. However, the blank page must be copied, and therefore paid for, as part of the set. That cost is deducted from the general fund rather than any individual.

I certainly wouldn't want anyone to write a shorter zine to avoid having an odd number of pages. However, if while DTPing a choice must be made as to the length of the document, an even number of pages will make things come out evenly, with less wasted paper.

\* **DTP and laser printing services**

I've DTPed and laser-printed several zines for contributors in the first three issues. I'm not complaining; truth to tell, it can be sort of fun. I was pleased to see that my attempt to capture **Collie Collier's** layout style in Interregnum #2 was fairly successful.

However, since my time is limited (and becomes tighter as collation looms), ASCII zines sent to me for layout should arrive at least four days before the deadline for printed zines. I'll attempt to capture the style of the contributor, if I have a sample of previous work and enough time. Otherwise, Caveat Emptor. 8^>}

I can also accept files created with Publish-It for DOS or Windows, or encapsulated PostScript files, on 3.5 or 5.25" disks. I should be able to accept files via email, but must admit that I haven't yet learned how to receive non-ASCII files over the InterNet.

ASCII contributors can choose to have their zines laser-printed; in that case the cost of the printing will be charged to their account (\$0.50 per page plus the cost of rental time if necessary—not more than a total of \$1 per page). Alternatively zines can be printed on my 24-pin dot matrix printer at 360 x 360 dpi for free. For a sample of 24-pin output, look at Virgil's and Collie's zines in Interregnum #2. It's not bad (if I say so myself), but detectable at close range.

For those who are wondering: yes, the purchase of a laser printer or other high-quality printing device is on the top of my purchase list.

\* It has been suggested that the accounts of contributors and subscribers be published in every issue. A number of folk object to this however; rather than include a partial listing, I'll note the amount left in the account on the mailing label of each issue. My only concern is that I'm not sure where to place that information — I don't want to give the Post Office an excuse to screw things up.

\* An InterNet alias has been set up which allows correspondents to receive information and updates about the status of Interregnum via the Net. Anyone who would like to be on that list should send email to maranci@max.tiac.net .

→ *Pete*



# THE LOG THAT FEELS

## #3

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Chaos has firmly asserted itself in my world as my computer has once again taken the Big Dive. Will it start today? Will it stay up? Will it make those awful noises again? I don't know. I just hope the CMOS doesn't die again, whatever *that* is. ☹

I'd be less annoyed if I hadn't recently taken the stupid thing into the shop and left it there for a week. The technicians performed every test in the book, only to come up empty. It's hard to refute animism when the machine stalled on boot-up every time in the days preceding my service call, and then booted up dozens of times without a hiccup at the shop. There's probably a perfectly simple explanation. Please, someone, call and tell me what it is! ☺

In any case, I have no way of knowing whether or not I'll be able to get this issue out on time. In fact, I don't even know if the computer will start again once I turn it off. I am not happy with this situation. Serves me right for not paying \$\$\$ for a national name-brand system, I guess.

## THE JUNGLE

I've never enjoyed any game run by the **Society for Interactive Literature**. For those who aren't familiar with such games, the concept is simple: Groups of forty or more players interact (usually over a weekend) in a huge game with pre-written characters. Though the games are technically live-action roleplaying, they involve no physical combat.

Instead, any conflict that cannot be resolved by talking is handled with some sort of simple mechanic such as rock-paper-scissors or various card games.



Too often such games are nothing more than a forum for pointless widget-hunting and in-group egoboosting; the worst elements of politics as seen in those gaming organizations I've been involved with. Petty personalities run amok, and who you know matters much more than what you do.\*

But the *concept* of the SIL-type game still fascinates me. I've dreamed about it a number of

\*That's not to say that there has never been a decent SIL/ILF game. But I've never been in one. ☺

times (the most recent occurrence being noted in my comment to **George Phillies** thisish), and so have some others I've spoken to. The potential is there; it's in the practice that things fall apart.

After a truly horrendous experience with the Foundation & Destiny SIL game (written up in a past issue of The Wild Hunt), I was bitterly disappointed. I knew that I could do a better job. Inevitably I found myself working out ideas for a better SIL-style game. The basic plot structure would be cooperative and inclusive, rather than competitive and hostile. Roleplaying would be the focus, rather than widget-hunting. Every player would be equal under the rules and in the eyes of the judges. And the game would have to be designed to make innovative use of simple props and available resources to create a different and exciting atmosphere.

The basic setting began to take shape. The game would be called *The Jungle*. It would be an original creation, but would draw strongly on the works of Rudyard Kipling: specifically, on The Jungle Books and Kim. In the heart of a deep jungle, an ancient City stands: the City of the Covenant. Within dwell Men, Spirits, Gods, and Beasts, in peace under the covenant to which all have agreed. But every hundred years the Covenant must be renewed. At the great Feast of Renewal those who bring and feed the most guests will receive the greatest luck in the next century.

The Gods (GMs) do not bring guests to the Feast; they are above matters of luck and unluck. But there are many groups that compete to bring guests: Nobles, Traders, various Talking Animals, and several different sorts of Spirits.

There's more, of course. A river runs from the outside world through the Jungle to the City, and many things swim in that river and float on it; one room at the game site might be designated as the River. Those travelling from one place in the Jungle to another via the River must go and spend a certain amount of realtime in that room, which would be lit with green and blue lights; water sounds would be a helpful mood setter.

Some PCs would be permanent River-dwellers, interacting as they might with each others and passersby (and adventuring to other areas, too).

The God of Fate would spin the Wheel of Destiny in the City. There the slain would go to discover the nature of their afterlife: as Spirit (and what sort?), reincarnation as a Beast or Man, or something stranger. In times of astronomical



significance the Wheel might stop or spin backwards, causing strange changes in the participants.

*The Jungle* may never be produced; it's not one of my higher priorities, and in any case I've no interest in joining the various organizations that put on such games. Still, it is an interesting idea, and I think it could be a lot of fun (after several hundred hours of work, anyway).

If you have any ideas for *The Jungle*, please pass them along. Perhaps someday *The Jungle* will be the first Interregnum-sponsored LARP.

## THE LAST GENERATION

**Star Trek: The Next Generation** has finally run its course. Only seven years ago I doubted that it would ever succeed; now, I'm truly sorry to see it go. Oh, it had a number of shortcomings. They never really managed to create aliens that were much more than people in rubber suits with glop on their faces. Likewise, the science doubletalk was often embarrassing and annoying. The lines were sometimes trite, the plots often preachy, moralistic, and obvious. While watching the show I would often rant about the annoying coincidence of so many plots obviously representative of the problems of 20th century Earth. "Oh yes, there was quite a \_\_\_ problem in 20th century Earth." Fill in the blank as you wish: drugs, race, religious, terrorist, environmental...apparently after the 20th century Earth became unbelievably boring. The problem wasn't really that they dealt with such issues, though; after all, to some extent they are universal. No, the annoying thing about the show was that it so often made the morals so condescendingly obvious. They dealt with the issues strictly from a present-day viewpoint, missing out almost completely on the larger view. At the same time, they'd often take the easy way out and use some sort of magic science device to avoid the crux of the problem.

I hadn't intended to excoriate the show so harshly. They did improve over time, in many ways. It was an entertaining show, apart from the dreadful and ghastly "Space-Dwelling Lucky Charms Folk Meet the Anal-Retentive Clones" episode. The special effects were pretty, though newer shows have begun to eclipse STNG. All in all, it was a good show.

But I doubt that there will ever be a science fiction series that will dominate the field in quite the same way ever again. Too many

others are producing decent science fiction shows these days, and though I may be overoptimistic I think that science fiction is here to stay on the tube. It's about time!

**Star Trek and Star Trek: The Next Generation** were the major causes of the infusion of science fiction into the mainstream. In that sense, their mission has been completed successfully.



## NOTHING BUT NET

The future of the **RuneQuest** roleplaying system remains in doubt. Negotiations are being conducted between **Avalon Hill**, the publishers of the system, and **Greg Stafford**, creator and copyright-holder. Near-absolute silence is the order of the day; no one is saying anything until some conclusion is reached. To the many active RQ fans on the InterNet, the waiting is agony.

Yet there is more high-quality **RuneQuest** available now than ever before, and more is coming out every day. Some of this appears in the various new **RuneQuest** magazines, but by far the



majority of it is being published on the InterNet first.

I find it impossible not to wonder at this situation. How is it that a system which has been so poorly supported can inspire such huge quantities of material from fans?

Of course, RuneQuest players tend to be among the most scholarly and mature folk in the hobby—not to suggest that non-RQ players aren't upscale, but it's safe to say that there are damn few hack-n-slashers playing RQ. It's also true that most of the material being distributed on the Net is extremely poorly organized, mixed in with pointless rules bickering and unreadable analyses of inscrutable details and minutia. Nonetheless, amidst the dross is more gold than is being written for *any* other game system of my acquaintance.

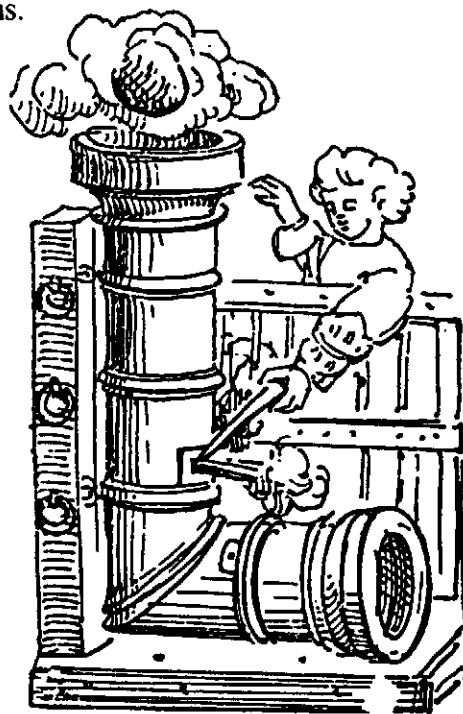
Can a game system exist solely on the InterNet, and actually flourish as a result? It seems possible. After all, the Net is a vastly superior distribution system. It reaches millions of people—I don't remember exactly how many, but certainly upwards of twenty million—all over the world. It goes right into their homes and places of business, whereas stores can only reach those who walk through their doors. From a strictly mathematical viewpoint, the Net offers access to more people—and from a roleplaying viewpoint, a better quality of people. Most Net users, being at least minimally computer-literate, are therefore likely to possess above-average intelligence. I don't have statistics to back me up, but I feel sure that the percentage of roleplayers is higher in higher-IQ groups. Also, MUDs and computer 'roleplaying' games have made roleplaying a more accessible and understandable subject for computer users.

Of course there's the issue of quality. The raw ASCII format is not very sexy; no pictures, no choice of fonts, little if any layout flexibility. These are technical shortcomings that will no

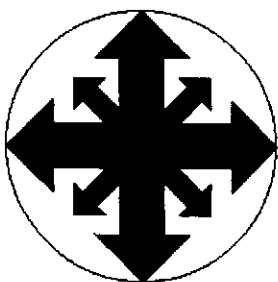
doubt be repaired within a few years, though. As it stands, artwork can be scanned and emailed over the Net, as can encapsulated PostScript and LaTeX. We're getting there, and in a few years it should be possible to make a better presentation via the Net than on paper.\*

In correspondence **David Dunham** brought up the issue of money. Why would anyone labor to create a scenario or supplement for a game when that effort would necessarily be unpaid? There's no way to make money from publishing over the Net, except perhaps via some sort of appeal-to-the-conscience shareware approach. That may change, but I'm not sanguine about the steps that might be necessary to get there—it seems likely that massive government/corporate intervention would result, limiting everyone's access.

On the other hand, is it necessary that something be profitable in order to be successful? Perhaps, but RQ has managed to get a lot of intelligent and talented people to spend a lot of time working for it without any hope of reward. Should RQ become an exclusively Net-based entity, that ability to inspire loyalty and fire the imagination might counterbalance the financial problems.



\* what with hypertext and all.



☺ **REVIEW** ☹  
**The Primal Order**  
**Chessboards: The Planes of**  
**Possibility**

**Generic RPG game-world design aid**

**Author:** Dave Howell

**Publisher:** Wizards of the Coast, 1993

**Price:** \$12.95

**Format:** 8.5" x 11" perfect-bound paperback, color covers, frequent b&w interior art and maps.

**Length:** 111 (plus several pages of ads)

Wizards of the Coast hardly needs to publish books anymore. With the phenomenal, frightening success of Magic: The Gathering the publication of anything else amounts to throwing away money. Nonetheless they've continued to put out books in their Primal Order series of metamagic/metaplane "capsystem" references.

Perhaps they (and the roleplaying hobby) would be better off if they'd publish a roleplaying game or supplement based on M:tG\*, instead. That might bring new players into the fold—probably not the most sophisticated players, but there's always room for improvement. Unfortunately the Primal Order series seems to be stuck in a rut.

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\*and I've heard on the grapevine that they're doing exactly that.

Chessboards is not really a bad work. The author is clearly intelligent and literate; the technical aspects of the writing are good. The subject of planes has certainly never been covered in such detail in a roleplaying product before. There are some good and amusing ideas included. But Chessboards is not particularly a leap forward for roleplaying, because it really has no purpose.

The book consists of two intermixed elements. One is a discourse on planar construction, attributes, and travel. While the ideas are interesting and I'm not aware that they've ever before been collected in one book and published, the author doesn't *do* much with them. The discussion is too abstract as a means of presentation, too diffuse. A good reference work needs to present information in a useful form. It may seem a strange complaint coming from me, but there are no tables.



The other element in the book is extensive writeups of several planes. They're entertaining enough, I suppose, but not of such quality that GMs are likely to adopt them for their own purposes. Such detailed but useless examples seem wasteful, of my money if nothing else. It doesn't help that the included maps are of abysmal quality—and I don't mean that they're damned good. 8^>} I should mention that the other interior art is good to excellent, though there are too many artists to list here.

I've advocated diceless systems often in the past. The lack of mechanics seems to bolster roleplaying opportunities. And of course I've always strongly supported the idea that gamemasters are best off creating their own worlds. Chessboards fits in with all of these ideas. But it also shows a crying need for mechanics and die-roll tables.

No, I haven't changed my opinions. But there are two times when a GM will create a world or series of planes: when they create a setting at the start of a campaign, or on the fly during an unexpected turn in the game. In the case of gameworld construction, the GM will have a great deal of time to spend in contemplation and reflection; after all, the foundations of the world may be key to the success of the entire game. Chessboards might be useful in such a case, but any reasonably well-read science fiction/fantasy fan or experienced roleplayer would already be familiar with the concepts presented. If the GM doesn't already have the basic concept of the world, a little thought should turn up useful ideas without the need to read 111 pages. Alternatively if the GM doesn't want to spend a lot of time creating his game world, there are a huge number of games on the market that come with worlds already designed and ready for play.

For creation of planes on the fly, Chessboards is of limited use. Here the lack of tables really shows. When I have to come up with a new plane fast I'd much rather roll a few dice on a table, or even look at concise lists of options rather than read through page after pages of exposition (personally I just fish into the back of my head and pull out whatever jumps to mind, but that's not a saleable system). One could riffle through the book at random to find a quick idea, but that's not a very practical or efficient way to work.

The fiction is not bad, but not very interesting either.

The layout is the standard Primal Order style: one wide column on each page, and a smaller column with notes and text in italics scattered throughout on the margin edge. In fact, it much resembles **Doug Jorenby's** zine, with the column order on the right page reversed. But it's not as interesting, and the result is far more white space than I'd want to see in a book at this price (particularly since some of the map pages are blank on one side, as well—with a more compact layout this book would probably be only 60 pages long).



Finally, I have to wonder as to what *market* this work is aimed at. Like the other books in the Primal Order series, it would be decent consciousness-raiser for hack-n-slash gamers; I doubt that such are likely to buy or read it, though. It's not visually attractive enough (there's no gold foil on the cover ☺), and I have the impression that most hack-n-slashers rarely buy anything published by a company with a name more than three letters long.

Experienced gamers are unlikely to need this work, on the other hand. They've heard it all before (or most of it), and have no strong reason to spend \$12.95 to hear it again. Beyond that, only gamemasters would have any use for Chessboards at all. After all, players don't design planes (except in the Amber Diceless RPG). The



book is an interesting read, but there's better reading material available at a much more reasonable price.

A fraction of a fractional market...it's lucky for Wizards of the Coast that Magic: the Gathering is such a huge success. If Chess-boards: The Planes of Possibility were all they had to base their business on, I could confidently predict their mildly unfortunate demise within two years.

Rating: C+

## DREAMS

I've always considered myself fortunate in dreams; I have them almost every night, and even the bad ones are interesting and fun. In fact, my dreams have sometimes provided valuable insights: one I had as a young teenager was particularly memorable.

It was a "normal" dream, in which everything was as if I weren't dreaming at all; I woke up, got up, and had breakfast. My mother drove me to the doctor's office for a checkup. Afterwards I was asked to wait outside while the doctor spoke to her. Sitting near the door I could hear the diagnosis: Leukemia. I had six weeks to live.

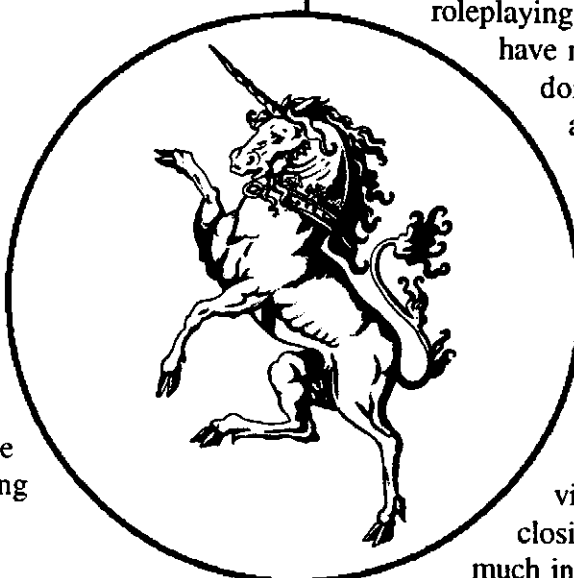
Mind you, as far as I knew I was awake and this was real. In the dream I went home, went to bed, and lay there trying to cope with the idea of death. What I was going to do in the time I had left? When I really woke up, I was still in bed. For at least an hour I lay there awake, still believing I had leukemia. I don't know when I realized that it had all been a dream, but if trumpets and heavenly choirs had sounded at that point I wouldn't have noticed.

I can't help but think of the ancient "Is the man dreaming he is a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming it is a man?" story. Could *this* be the dream? I'm fairly sure it isn't. 8^>}

In any case, that experience has stayed with me. I've known, for a little while, what it's like to be facing death. I think that understanding has been useful to me.

Dreams have been a large part of almost all my roleplaying games, too. Sometimes they have meaning, sometimes they don't. Capturing the capricious and surreal quality of dreams is always a challenge, and always fun.

The following story came entirely from a dream. It's the only story that has ever come to me that way, complete. Perhaps that's why I like it; I have a visual image to tie it to. The closing paragraph is, of course, much influenced by H.P. Lovecraft.



## THE OLD THING

by Peter Maranci

I was walking to and fro, up and down the worlds one night when I saw an old thing, hobbling among the stars. She was as common an old thing as you'd ever want to see: wrinkled and ancient, with a big ugly black dress and kerchief dark as the sky, a few thin wisps of blue-white hair straggling out from beneath. I looked at her, and wondered what had brought such a prosaic sight to the spaces between the stars.

As always, the spheres sang all around. Nearby, a small yellow star sent a clear yellow hymn of reassurance to the tiny globes that circled it. One planet, a pretty blue-green one, pleased my eye particularly; it swarmed with life.

The planet caught the attention of the old thing, too. A gap I took for a smile suddenly cracked its wrinkled face, and one crabbed hand reached for the shining blue globe. Not quite knowing why, I reached forth from my dream and stopped the claw-like hand of the old thing just short of the sphere. The old thing couldn't see me, of course, but nonetheless was somehow aware of my presence—bewildered, it looked around, liquid brimming in its eyes. With a detached feeling of surprise I realized that the old thing was simple, its mind that of a child. Tears broke loose and sparkled in the warm yellow light, hanging before the faded cheeks like little suns.

Something throbbed in the base of my throat. The old thing had the eyes of a hurt and frightened animal. *Where had I seen such eyes before?* A strange shiver ran down my spine, and I released the hand of the old thing. She looked about for a moment, and then, with a wary gentleness that was curious to see, grasped the planet firmly and pulled it out of its orbit.

For a moment a lunatic light from some strange-colored star tinged my thoughts, and I was sure she would eat it. But no, it wouldn't happen that way now; instead she took the planet and pressed it to her withered cheek, a childlike joy in her eyes. The blue shimmered around the old thing's head, transforming it into a vision of inexplicable beauty. For a timeless moment the stars whirled around me, shining through the blue mist as I watched.

After a long while, she gently and carefully put the planet back where it had been and hobbled away, a trace of shimmering blue marking her passage. I looked at the globe, now cold, gray, and barren, and felt a cold wind blowing between the stars.

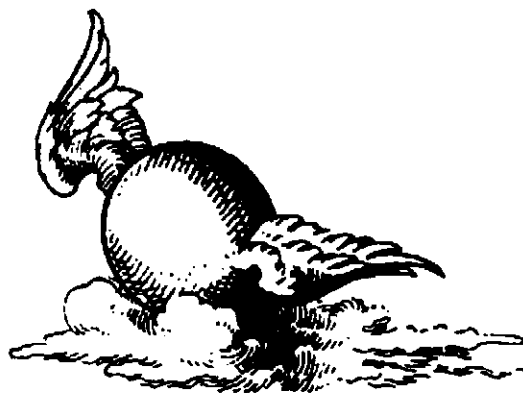
That was a long time ago, when my world was young. These days my dreams take me to darker places, places where I do not willingly

go; but even now, lying awake late at night, I sometimes think about that old thing among the stars. Perhaps she is there still.

- fin -

## BE MY GUEST

Rich Staats is a fine GM, a fellow RuneQuest fan, and one of the nicest guys you'd ever want to meet. He's also just received his Ph.D from MIT and will be moving to Washington DC in a few weeks—which means I won't get a chance to play in one of his games. Wouldn't you know it! However, Rich has kindly allowed me to include some material he created for an **It Came From the Late Late Show** scenario in this issue as a guest column. It's at the end of this zine. I've never played the system, but Rich's material makes it look like a lot of fun. Guess I'll have to start looking for a GM... ☺



## COMMENTS #2

**Doug Jorenby:** Synchronicity seems to have been working when we wrote our zines for #2, Doug! Surprising that we both referred to the InterNet quote. I often read Wired, but hadn't read that issue.

✱ Your mention of tachistoscopes intrigued me—I haven't heard of those since I read Robert Heinlein's *Gulf*. Are they still used? How realistic was Heinlein's portrayal of them, assuming you're read that story?

✱ I laughed out loud at your account of the AD&Ders™ who were proud that their GM managed to ad lib a section of a module. It reminds me of an experience of my own: while gaming in a public area long ago I heard a bunch of AD&Ders playing in the next room; I was told that they were the "deep roleplaying" group. The gamemaster was running a T&R module, totally unmodified—I know, because he read the entire thing aloud. Including such passages as "In the hall there are Large Red Dragons hidden behind the third, seven-teenth, and twenty-third doors. The treasure is in the room behind door twenty-five, protected by a poison trap that can be disarmed by..."

The players considered themselves the greatest roleplayers in the world. ☺

**Mark Sabalauskas:** Glad to finally get a zine from you, Mark! Welcome to Interregnum. Guess that just goes to show that lots of begging and pleading for a zine work after all. 8^>}

✱ The Fronelan material was great. I'm sure that many RuneQuest players will find it highly useful. I wish the spells had been available when I was playing in your campaign!

✱ For some reason your mention of the concept of Solace (for non-RQers, a sort of sorcerous/monotheist afterlife) brings the word "Solitude" to mind. Do you recall if that's a Hrestoli concept of some sort? If not, perhaps I should work out some details and write a scenario about it.

✱ I look forward to seeing your next zine in Interregnum #4!

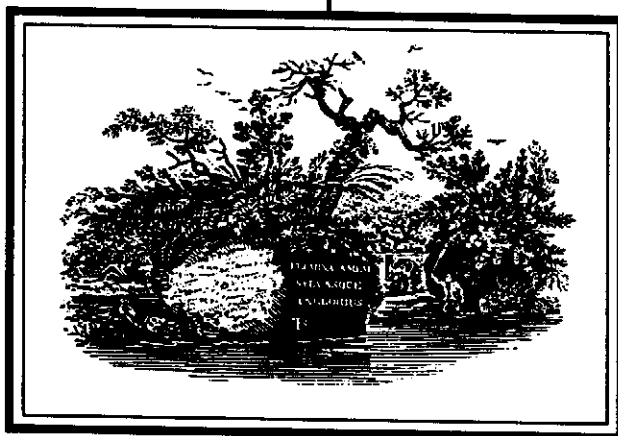
**Curtis Taylor:** Thanks for the Strangers In Prax errata. As soon as I dig my copy out from under the books that carpet my bedroom, I'll look them up.

✱ Regarding the RuneQuest situation, I'm becoming more and more annoyed (in a mild way) with the major parties involved. The conspiracy of silence has been dragging on and on...frankly, the whole thing is starting to seem overblown. It may be heresy to say it, but this is a *game*. Too many people are getting too serious about this.

As for the business end of it, perhaps part of the problem is that Avalon Hill doesn't know where they want to go with RuneQuest. I don't know if major marketing could make RuneQuest a competitor with AD&D or even GURPS; it seems dubious, at this point. With proper support RQ could be a modest success, and perhaps even grow over time. But I'm not sure that AH is interested in modest success.

Given the revelations that Chaosium was responsible (if that is the correct word) for the creation of RuneQuest III, I'm not entirely sanguine about the possibility of Chaosium taking back the license from Avalon Hill. I suspect it would be grossly neglected for other projects. In any case the rumors that Chaosium is working on a new Gloranthan roleplaying game have me a bit baffled. How could such a game not infringe on their agreement with Avalon Hill?

I don't know, and nobody is talking. If the silence lasts much longer, I suspect that quite a few people will lose interest in the whole subject. Except in APAs, of course. 8^>}



## F. Bob Mosdal:

Welcome to Interregnum, F. Bob! The zine looks fine indeed. Strange that both you and Mark Sabalauskas debuted in #2 and missed #3! I hope to see you in Interregnum #4.

✱ The review of Millennium's End v2.0 was most interesting, though slightly confusing—it took me a minute to realize that you

weren't talking about a computer game. All in all, it sounds a bit complicated. Will you actually be playing the game?

✱ Regarding Interregnum, thanks for the encouragement. At this point, I probably need it. 8^>}

**Virgil Greene:** Thanks for the TV reviews. It's a pity they aren't all on at a standard time and channel...the vagaries of Babylon 5's scheduling locally is driving me up the wall. That's an excellent way to destroy any show, however good (though B5 does have noticeable flaws). Also, thanks for reminding me of *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*. One of my favorite shows, and I wish they'd bring it back.

**Collie Collier:** A great article, Collie. Fun and informative. I've made a few timelines for games in the



past, but I'm sure that any I write in the future will be influenced by your ideas.

I have to wonder, though, how many GMs these days are creating their own game worlds, much less timelines. I could be wrong, but I suspect that more games are being run in pre-published worlds than was the case years ago; after all, there are a lot more game worlds on the market.

**George Phillies:** The second half of Who Slays Satan was as good as the first. First-rate! You really should send this to a prozine, George. If any are interested in fantasy these days.

✱ Who Slays Satan actually inspired a very strange dream of mine recently. I dreamed I was playing in a large SIL-type game, set in a fantasy court at a time of high intrigue and suspense. The setting was more lavish than any SIL-game, though: the costumes and settings were incredibly detailed and elaborate, huge and awe-inspiring. The line between game and dream-reality blurred and vanished.

A demon had possessed a seemingly innocent courtier and was intriguing Iago-style, bringing corruption and dissent to the Court and Church. Factions struggled for power as the time of Election approached. Finally one magician-priest summoned up a trio of ogre-demons to kill the possessed courtier. "Hi, Harvey," grinned one orc-faced grey demon as he lifted his strangely twisted greatsword for the final blow, "what are you doing out of Hell?"

I thought at the time that Harvey was a strange name for a demon.

Suddenly there was a commotion, and a fanfare. A small tonsured monk came forward, holding a box. I knew that in that box was the Sacred Heart...and that while it would banish the ogre-demons, the possessing demon would be unharmed. Somehow Harvey the demon had manipulated the situation to its own ends.

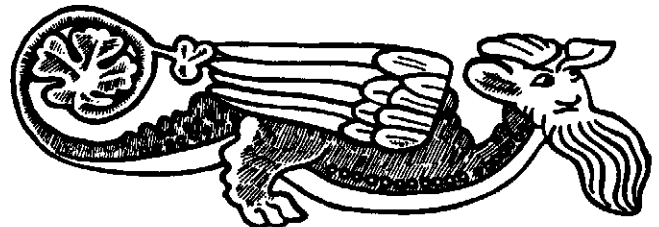
The box was opening. The Heart was huge, and beating. Things became strange, reminiscent of portrayals of an acid trip on TV. Showers of sacred blood rained down over specific people, who turned their faces upward and were weirdly transformed, cleansed of sin. The ogre-demons melted and vanished. And the courtier scrambled out of sight to safety. The demon had won.

Weird, huh? I thought some of the imagery seemed somewhat Catholic, which is strange because I have very little experience with that church.

✱ Regarding the zine title: it derives from the King Log fable in the editorial page of Interregnum #1, of course. Beyond that, I'm not sure what it means; it just kind of amuses me. One interpretation might be that the zine is made of paper, which was once logs. Now it's shipped to subscribers and contributors in far-away places via airmail. Ergo, flying logs. Other interpretations are possible though. That one is just off the top of my head.

## INTERREGNUM

Text printed on white paper, at the very least. I promise. ☺



## COLOPHON:

The Log That Flies #3 was gestated in a *P. Maranci 30.2 brain*. Much of the text was then generated with *PC-Write 2.5*, an ancient but serviceable word processor.

The text was formatted for desktop publication using *Publish-It 4.0 for Windows*, a cranky but cheap DTP program.

The DTPed document was printed at a ruinous cost at a laser printing service, on a 300 dpi laser printer.

Most of the art in *TLTF* is taken from books of copyright-free clipart published by the **Dover Publishing Co.** of Mineola, NY. Reviews of various Dover books may be printed in future issues.

The art was copied on a **Kodak 2110** high-speed duplicator.

Take care, all!

—>Pete

## *The Fastest Tentacle in the West*

by

*JigSaw Productions*

**Commonly Known Background:** The film takes place in Gopher City, Territory of Kansas in October 1856. Thanks to Senator Douglas' repeal of the Nebraska Compromise these are violent times in the Territory as the Abolitionists and the Pro-Slavery factions are battling it out over the future of Kansas. Kansas City is the capitol according to the Pro-Slavery faction while Topeka is the rightful capitol claim the Abolitionists. Gopher City lies smack dab in the middle both literally and figuratively. President Buchanan was just sworn in as the president in February 1856. Senator Sumner was beaten into unconsciousness by a die hard adversary from South Carolina on the floor of the Capitol chambers! John Brown is currently on trial for the Kansas Massacre. Yes, most citizens in Kansas are armed to the teeth and dangerous! Only the crazy, wanted or both wander into Kansas Territory. This will someday be known as "The Great American Desert", and Kansas has little to offer with the exception of freezing winters, blistering summers, no water and constantly blowing wind. It was a time and a place when anything could happen! Gopher City stands on the rail between Kansas City and Topeka. Gopher City has a population of approximately 250 citizens plus an additional 75 to 100 "guests" depending on the weather and time of year. Gopher City makes its living primarily through the cattle trade. A few indigent farmers eke out an existence from the miserly prairie earth. Gopher City is served by a newspaper called the "Gopher City Times" which comes out each Friday. The terrain around Gopher City is primarily flat with rolling hills. The main exception to this is Mystic Mountain which lies approximately 25 miles north of the city. Mystic Mountain is a holy place to the Cthulhu-Ftagn Indian tribe. Most of the tribe was slaughtered by the sane tribes surrounding it long ago, but those few hardy survivors cling tenaciously to Mystic Mountain which is a holy (unholy?) place for them.

**The Story to Date:** On Thursday, October 2, 1856, a huge fireball crossed the sky directly over the top of Gopher City and impacted in the vicinity of Mystic Mountain. Many took this as a sign from the Almighty as to His significant displeasure over the current fussing in Kansas over the legality of slavery. The impact from the fireball was felt as far away as Topeka, and several sections of the rail had to be replaced. Ever since that time, strange things have been occurring in the vicinity of Gopher City. Cattle have been found mutilated. Sheep have been found painted hot pink. Most people attributed these things to wolves or stray coyotes, but the good citizens of Gopher City could not ignore the last occurrence on October 22. Lil' Jimmy, the good natured cripple and everyone's friend, was abducted from his bedroom! The only clue as to the guilty party was a trail of slime leading directly back to Mystic Mountain. Some folks think that the Indians are responsible. Others think that it is the work of devils and demons conjured up by all the hate in

the Territory. Still others believe that giant prairie worms have been released by all the "sod busters", farmers, and no one is safe any longer. The Gopher City Marshall Big Bad Bob rounded up every able bodied volunteer and swore them in as deputies. The stars of the film are all newly sworn in deputies. Most of the stars, Smelly Bart, Kitty Warbucks, Tiny Jones, James T. Jones and Gimpy Olson are local citizens, but two of the deputies, Arthur M. Robbins and Silky Six-shooter, recently drifted into town. There are several extras assigned as deputies as well. The extras are all identified by the red shirts they wear.

### Persona Dramatis

**Smelly Bart:** is a drover and works out of the Drovers' Livery in town. Smelly is known for being flippant but emotional. Smelly has traveled extensively and was known to be a sailor for a time. Smelly picked up the use of bolo's during his travels. Smelly is very punctual. He has two things that plague him secretly. Smelly's sweetheart and he had a terrible fight about a year ago. She was so angry she stormed out of town. No one ever saw her again. Smelly blames himself for her disappearance. Although he searched high and low, the only thing that Smelly ever found was her shawl. Smelly also had an unusual childhood. He was raised in Sarnath, Massachusetts until his 14th birthday. Imbolc of that year brought doom to Sarnath. Smelly was the only survivor. People looked funny at Smelly after that; he finally had to move out West. Smelly is helping out Marshall Bob for civic reasons.

**Kitty Warbucks:** They say people say ghosts the day Kitty was born, and now days people would say you will be haunted by Kitty's beauty the rest of your life if you spy her in work at Hoover's Wholesale Liquor and Saloon. Kitty was selected as the special advisor to the territorial governor, Sam Belson, pertaining to issues of tariffs and Indian resettlement. Little did Governor Belson know that Kitty was part of the ill fated Corn Huskers' rebellion not many years ago! Kitty lived in Witchita back then and had to flee when the rebellion faltered. She lived in the mountains for a time and picked up some mountaineering skills. Most people who know Kitty would describe her as being benign and very friendly. If pressed, people might also mentions that Kitty drinks up most of the profits at Hoover's. Kitty agreed to be deputized to keep her on the wagon a few more days. Hey! Quit? Sure Kitty can quit! She has already done it dozens of times!

**Silky Six-shooter:** is a drifter, and she just wandered into town about a week ago. Silky is currently staying at Hoover's. Although she is a stranger, folks here in Gopher City give her a wide berth. It might have something to do with that outlaw she plugged through the temple at 100 paces the first day she was in town, or it might just be that people all have seasonal affective disorder. Who can rightly say? Silky is a bounty hunter, and she came to town for a particular bounty to collect. She is looking for one each Peter J.



Smith who escaped from a "crazy house" out East. You tracked Smith all the way to Kansas City, but you lost him there. That was six years ago. You think that Old Pete might be right here in Gopher City. The family is offering \$250 in gold eagles to you if you can kill Pete and prove his death. From what you know of him, he might have something to do with what happened. People who know Silky are dead, but if someone alive did know Silky they would describe her as careful and pessimistic. There is certainly no one who is alive who would reveal that Silky is a hypochondriac. Silky can predict the weather based on the pain in her shoulders. Silky has a very nice horse. Silky is going on the posse to improve her chances of spotting Pete.

**Tiny Jones:** is the town blacksmith and he is anything but tiny. Tiny is a Mormon. He is virtuous and introverted, and some would describe Tiny as being Quixotic. Tiny sees a "miracle" in everything, E-V-E-R-Y-T-H-I-N-G! He has the ability to perform arithmetic quickly in his head. He has a faithful sheep dog named Akira. Akira is trained to do simple tricks such as: hold ace in mouth between hands under card table, urinate on banker's leg, etc. About six years ago Tiny's father passed away. Didn't bother him much; he hated the bastard. But, Tiny did come in possession of a little book covered with a real nice fine grained leather, kind of dun colored. The book was blank up until this month and now suddenly "thar is sum goddum werts in this'in har' book!" If only Tiny could read! Tiny is going on the posse to relieve the endless boredom of living in Gopher City.

**Arthur M. Robbins:** is also new to town. Mr. Robbins is an investigator of the occult. There was an escape from a sanitarium some years ago by one Mr. Peter J. Smith, III. The scene was grisly, and Mr. Smith was blamed for the death of the night watchman. But, something about the crime bothered you! You paid the local undertaker, Mr. H.P. Lovecraft, to help you ex-hume the body. Further investigation revealed that the teeth marks on the body "could not have been the work of humans!" Mr. Robbins has had the theory for some time that the Earth is frequently visited by a group of aliens known only as the Splorkoids. He first found evidence for this while examining the Aztec book of life while in Spanish Republic of Mexico. Apparently, Mr. Smith was espousing much the same theory shortly before he left the sanitarium. Mr. Robbins wants to find Mr. Smith and bring him *safely* back to Arkham, Massachusetts where Mr. Smith can be questioned at length. Mr. Robbins is a very giving person, but he is also in search of the ultimate form of pleasure possible. He has a fear of heights, and Mr. Robbins prefers to spend his time at the card table where he can use his ability at card sharking to make a little money on the side. He is ambidextrous and can use his feet to fire if pressed. Mr. Robbins had a run in with the Marshall when he first got to town and his going on the posse to clear his name.

**James T. Jones:** is the local lawyer. Mr. Jones is very thrifty and very curious. This curiosity got him into trouble in Abilene. Mr. Jones dug a little too far

into a murder trial for his client and ended up being run out of town on a rail. Mr. Jones' wife, Puppy Warbucks, is the sister of the Kitty Warbucks who bartends at Hoover's. With no where to go, anyway is the right direction and Mr. Jones decided he might as well go to Gopher City where at least he has some in-laws. Mr. Jones is very conscious of his appearance and is constantly primping himself. His features are quite pale; one would call him an albino except that his eyes are pigmented, bright green. Mr. Jones believes in political action and is an active member of the Abolitionist party. He can really cut the rug when it comes time to dance, and Mr. Jones is an outrageous flirt. Mr. Jones is going on the posse, because he is curious about what really happened.

**Gimpy Olson:** is a livestock trader. He works out of the Well's Fargo office. Mr. Olson has a peculiar background. He was adopted and never knew his real parents. Both of his foster parents died mysteriously about a year later. Mr. Olson was placed in an orphanage, and the orphanage burned to the ground. Finally, he made his way out West. The wagon train was sacked and burned by the Cthulhu-Ftagn Indian tribe just outside of Gopher City. Well it must of been the work of providence, because things have gone well for Mr. Olson ever since...until now that is! No one is bringing their cattle to Gopher City knowing that the livestock is liable to be mutilated before it can be sold. Mr. Olson had a run in with Black Bart, the notorious outlaw, about four years ago. Black Bart was on a killing spree and shot six bystanders to death. Gimpy was lucky. He escaped with this life, but his left kneecap was shattered. Gimpy is going on the posse to get to the cause of the cattle mutilations and stop them.

#### *Cast of Extras*

**Big Bad Bob:** is the city Marshall. He is neither competent nor agreeable. He begs to killed early in the film. He wears a big white hat and a red bandanna.

**Black Bart:** is a notorious outlaw. He favors gems and jewelry in particular. He is completely diabolic and is infamous for his blind rages and killing sprees. He wears black.

**Old Pete:** is the town drunk. He is a lovable old guy, and most folks in town have bought drinks for him now and then. His "stories" become more interesting the more red liquor Pete has. He came to town in 1850.

**Nameless Extras:** are the common folk of Gopher City. Most of them wear read flannel shirts. Many of them carry items labeled "NCC-1701-security detachment, landing parties". They have been chosen for their collective abilities to perform dramatic deaths.

*Enjoy,  
Rick Staab  
Director*

# WHO IS JOHN GALT? #3

Looters beware!

Curtis Taylor, P. O. Box 1144, Ontario, CA 91762-0144/(909) 985-3355/vingkot@aol.com

Glorantha is the creation of Greg Stafford. RuneQuest is a registered trademark of the Avalon Hill Game Company. RQ Font is copyright Oliver Jovanovic 1993. Who is John Galt? is copyright Curtis Taylor 1994. The character John Galt is a creation of Ayn Rand. The use of the name of any product with or without mention of trademark status should not be construed as a challenge to such status.

## STRANGERS IN PRAX LUNAR CODERS ERRATA 1.1:

Listed below is more errata for the first mini-campaign (*The Lunar Coders*) of the *RuneQuest* supplement, *Strangers in Prax*. This information has been provided by Michael O'Brien, who gave me permission to present this errata to you in this zine. This errata originally appeared in Michael's contributions to the *RuneQuest* Daily. Thanks, Michael. Also, thanks to Peter J. Whitelaw for noticing some errors that Michael provided answers to. Please note that this errata may not be complete.

Peter J. Whitelaw questions Michael:

page 25 "Maculus' Sorcery Regimen: Every Season Maculus casts a Damage Resistance Intensity 13, Duration 13 on each of the other Coders except Julian."

However, the hit location diagram for Anderida shows no bracketed damage protection, just the 12 from her Cloak. Nose

Ring's shows but 12 bracketed damage resistance, similarly Eslas'. Is this an oversight or am I unaware of some subtlety in the Sorcery rules?

Michael answers:

Nah, you're right. For some reason Anderida didn't get the Damage Resistance put in brackets. You can either change Nose Ring and Eslas to Damage Resistance 13 or change Maculus to 12; he can handle the MPs either way, and in any case, as he finds this sort of work mechanical and demeaning, sometimes he might do 12 points and other times he might do 13. (This discrepancy must've come about when we changed how Maculus protected the other Coders. I was originally playing about with the Protective Circle spell, but Mike (Dawson) changed how the spell worked and we

switched back to plain old Damage Resistance).

Peter J. Whitelaw questions Michael:

Page 33: Eslas has "stiff leather" on her body and her Coder cloak is enchanted +8AP. Her hit location diagram shows 11 torso AP. Was it intended to be 10AP or is her "stiff" leather more like cuirboilli?

Michael answers:

She's got soft leather padding (1 AP) UNDER her stiff leather jerkin (2 AP).



## COMMENTS ON INTERREGNUM #2

Peter Maranci:

☺ There is a bread factory down the block from where I work. It smells great about 2:00-4:00 AM.

☺ I am currently running an infrequent *Champions* game with a single hero. I am participating in a *Magic: The Gathering* league.

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⌘ My list of questions is longer, and modified for each game, depending on the focus of the game and the genre. I generally stay with the same group of players, so they usually don't give me many problems, and I don't generally give them many problems.

⌘ The GURPS spells were made during an outdoors-type campaign. That is the only derivation that I used.

⌘ I believe the *Traveller* supplement you are think about is 76 *Patrons*. More Gloranthan seeds on the wings.

⌘ I don't think that being subject to an illusion (xD&D version) would give a person the ability to entomb themselves in rock. More likely the person would find themselves on the surface of, rather than entombed in, the rock upon successfully disbelieving the illusion. The illusion spells worked on a persons mind, not their body. Any damage results were the result of mental shock. Frex, a person damaged by an illusionary sword would not have bloody slashes open on their skin.

Douglas E. Jorenby:

⌘ I edit the questions to suit whatever game I am running at the time.

Mark Sabalauskas:

⌘ Welcome to *Interregnum*.

⌘ I am always happy to see more Gloranthan material in print. Keep it up.

F. Bob Mosdal:

⌘ Welcome to *Interregnum*.

⌘ RAEBNC

Virgil S. Greene:

⌘ I am glad you liked the Gloranthan hooks. Thanks.

Collie Collier:

⌘ I just notice that you live pretty close to where I work. Also, do you ever get over to North Hollywood for LASFS?

⌘ Very much enjoyed your article on timelines!

George Phillies:

⌘ It is not what I do with the questions that is important, but what the players do with them that is important. I want

the players to use the questions to explore their own characters, thus providing for a deeper role-playing experience for everyone involved.

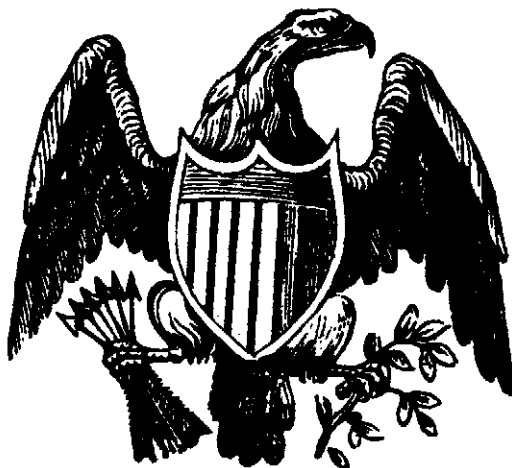
⌘ RAEBNC on fiction.

## GLORANTHAN HOOKS

The young Orlanthi initiates must guard the Ernaldan cultists during Sacred Time as one of their rituals. During the night trolls attack.

A troll caravan is passing through. A couple of their large insects used as work beasts escape near dawn due to the actions of the local Eumal priest. The trolls, unfamiliar with the local terrain and not liking daytime to much, request the PC's help to recapture the insects during the daytime, before the insects get to far away. (What if one of the insects lays eggs nearby prior to capture? Will this result in a plague of giant rogue insects next season, right around the harvest?)

The local Chalana Arroy healer needs to replenish her supplies of healing herbs. The PCs have been elected to guard her during the two day round trip journey to the nearest site of special herbs that she wants. Unfortunately, some trolls are assaulting the forest in about the same spot that the PCs are bivouacked at.



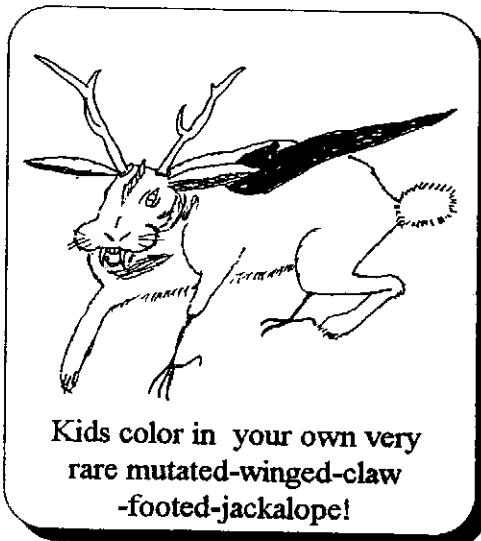
**Colophon:** Produced on my friendly Macintosh Quadra 660AV (20/230) (AKA Quadthulu) using Microsoft Word 5.1. Graphics courtesy of New Heights, 10483 South Amaryllyis, Sandy, UT 84094. Printed on my rusty HP DeskWriter.

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Greetings and welcome to the fourth installment of *Aye, Matey*! I'm at a bit of a loss as to what to write so this will be mostly a spewing of random barnacles, seaweed and other drivel (like the other ones weren't). And some even more horrific things like a few comments about *Magic: The Gathering™*.

I enjoy many different genres of roleplaying. Fantasy, cyberpunk, sci-fi are a few of the classics but the stuff I can sink me ol' hook into is the post-holocaust (e.g. *A Boy and His Dog*, *Damnation Alley*, *Road Warrior*) setting. I have never had the opportunity to play in one; I think I must be one of the few that really enjoy this type of setting. In order to try to inspire more of these types of games (so I might have a chance to play in them). I thought I would bring a few ideas that I came up with when I ran one.



Kids color in your own very rare mutated-winged-claw-footed-jackalope!

have some interesting religious ceremonies revolving (so to speak) around firearms. One such ritual has to do with the little girls coming of age. Upon reaching 15 all the other girls age 8-14 come to give her a party, each bearing a small decorative box. In each box is a small candle and a bullet. She puts the candles half into a sponge-type substance and lights them and ritually shoots the candles at 25 yards away. However many she misses is how many years she must go before she can date.

Upon the 100th anniversary of the occupation of the shelter "Eagles Nest" the President of the Howling Coyotes holds an unprecedented meeting that all the people no matter what are required to attend (not hard for a population of 200). Nathan Smith (el Presidente)

announces that the time of the Great Cleansing has passed and the founding fathers have spoken to him (they actually have via laser disk) and he has been ordained to select (# of PC's) of the chosen to be the first to witness the miracle (actually they told him to pick the most expendable of the current gene pool). Nathan also tells the chosen that there might be a small risk and that they should arm themselves "just in case" those clever liberals lived through the cleansing fire. The chosen are sat in front of a television and forced to watch endless speeches by Carter and Clinton so that they may recognize the enemy.

After selecting whatever equipment they want (within reason) they are sent on a one year mission to get all the information they can about the new world. They are escorted to one of the holiest of holies; no one except the president is usually allowed there. The room has a bright and glimmering form in it. The PC's might think it's God but it's really just a solar powered All Terrain Vehicle (complete

## **Bomb Shelters** **of the Holy**

a.k.a.-The Survivalists Were Right?!

The setting is 2094 in what used to be the Rocky Mountains in Colorado about 700 feet below the surface. Just long enough to have a fourth or fifth generation that would have become accustomed to the society of the shelter and just long enough for the outside world to become more a thing of legend and myth. The time gap would also help lesson the initial xenophobic survivalist qualities that it was founded upon.

The initial party members are all from the shelter. The Howling Coyote Shelter Unit was founded upon the idea that God would send a cleansing fire to kill all the unbelievers and they would be the ones to inherit the earth. Everyone is assigned a gun at birth and they



with tools and manuals). Solar power makes it an interesting plot device and what any survivalist would choose to last 200 years or so (This could really bring on the fear of the night. I can envision driving away from a horde of running savages as the sun is slowly dropping below the horizon ...).

Anyhow, they say some prayers and enter the vehicle. It slowly lifts sky-err ceiling-ward and is protruded through some heavy duty bulkheads which promptly close behind them. They are in complete darkness when a voice on a speaker in the car said "let there be light!" and any other corny godlike phrases that the GM feels like inflicting on the PC's. A deafening boom is heard and the ground literally shakes

beneath them for about 15 seconds (a large bomb was set up by the forefathers to blast off any debris that might have incurred in the last 100 years). Slowly the door in front of the vehicle opens to allow a murky combination of light and dust. The journey has begun.

There were many other elements that I might go into in a later zine but now it's time for something brainless.

## MAGIC: THE QUICKENING OF RICHIE

or: Help me! My mind is melting!

*Quickenin*-When an immortal proves he/she is superior and deserves some stupid power by chopping another immortal head off.

I Don't know how many of the readers of *Interregnum* watch the *Highlander* television series but many of us have been having a debate as to why Richie is still alive

and we all came to the same conclusion: If anyone quickens Richie they will lose most of all the knowledge and will start doddering around saying "Huh, huh, *Metalica* kicks ass!"

## The Scuttle

This area will be used to review great and crappy games, be they board, computer or role-playing (tabletop, live or otherwise). All the computer games reviewed here were run on a 386DX-40MHz, co-processor, 8 meg RAM, MS DOS 6.0, Windows 3.1, and a Pro Sonic 16 sound card (100% compatible with Adlib and Soundblaster cards) system.

*All games are based on the Jolly Roger Scale (1-10 1 being poorest piece-o-krud ever seen and 10 being great keg-o-fun).*



## Microsoft's ENCARTA 1994 edition

Jolly Roger Rating: 7.5

I know many people have a higher rating for this but I guess I always have the same flaw when it comes to encyclopedias. I wish they would go into more detail on all the subjects. I feel they should have three levels of information. One that is just an overview, a second that talks about the subject in basic terms and then a final level that tells you all the nitty gritty details. Overall I would say this is still a must for any family library. It can show things in a manner that is just impossible with books (animation and sound) and the ability to print out the information combined with hypertext makes it an invaluable tool.

## Weird Magic Ideas

The following information will be a complete waste of your time if you:

- a) don't know anything about the game *Magic: The Gathering*.
- b) hate the game!

I recently came up with a deck design that would be considered crazy to most people but it's won about 90% of the games I've used it in (around 20). It's a self Millstoning deck that I affectionately call "Dig-Dug." It revolves around the idea of Resurrection, Tim in a Can (Triskelion), Archaeologist and Unstable Mutation (so it can resemble its namesake if any of you can remember back to an old videogame that went by the same name).

Basically you skip the first turn of placing land if you have something cool in your hand (like a certain artifact eating demon) and place it in the discard pile. I know it sounds insane but it really works nicely when you Resurrect it.

Another trick is keeping your Archaeologist alive long enough to rustle up some "Demon Chow." A way around the ever annoying Tim is putting out Crusades and Jihads.

*Remember kids, don't clutter up the discard pile so be sure to recycle.*

## Davey Jones' Locker

or Comments to Interregnum #1

Peter Maranci: Congrats on your first issue. It looked very svelte. I wish you would put out the Bar Wars version with the humor. The serious version is good but the one with the humor was much better.

Virgil Greene: Glad to see a new zine aboard. Enough about the duck already :-). In case any of you out there care I played the foul psycho Dragonewt that tried to do everyone a favor and off the duck. This game ended in 1990 and has emotionally traumatized Virgil ever since. I loved the reviews of all the gaming magazines, it's nice to know there is a real choice out there.

Dana Erlandsen: A very nice in depth game background. I found reading the relationships of all the npc's very fascinating, tell us more.

David Hoberman: I fund the same problem with the cyberpunk genre that you pc had. I think it would be interesting to have a cyberpunk campaign were everyone was good, honest and caring. Sort of a *Barney* gang. At least it would be sorta an interesting version of Paranoia.

Curtis Taylor: Some of the questions for the PCs were new to me. I like the idea of asking about their pet. I think it's quite insightful.

George Phillies: I liked the story but the end was just a little too sugar coated for me. I thought the *Who Slays Satan* was excellent Kudos!

Douglas Jorenby: *Traveller* still scares me :)

## Comments to Interregnum #2

Peter Maranci: The Grey Company rules! It's a great excuse to go into the rubble with weak characters.

About Alexander, your right in that he was ment to be a short lived character. I thought it would be entertaining to see who would kill him first :D

Doug Jorenby: Thanks for the book tip. It's really quite amazing the amount of contradictory rulings there are in the © field.

Mark Sabalauskas: The coinage is interesting but it is just too much for my Int-8 to handle.

*Color Glass* is a very interesting spell and well needed. I like seeing more practical every day spells that would undoubtedly come around in the day to day lives of the common people. I can see people hero questing for a vacuum cleaner equivalent :)

I liked your 70's Magic ideas better than my own. I was laughing quite hard at them (especially the *Bell Bottoms* creature).

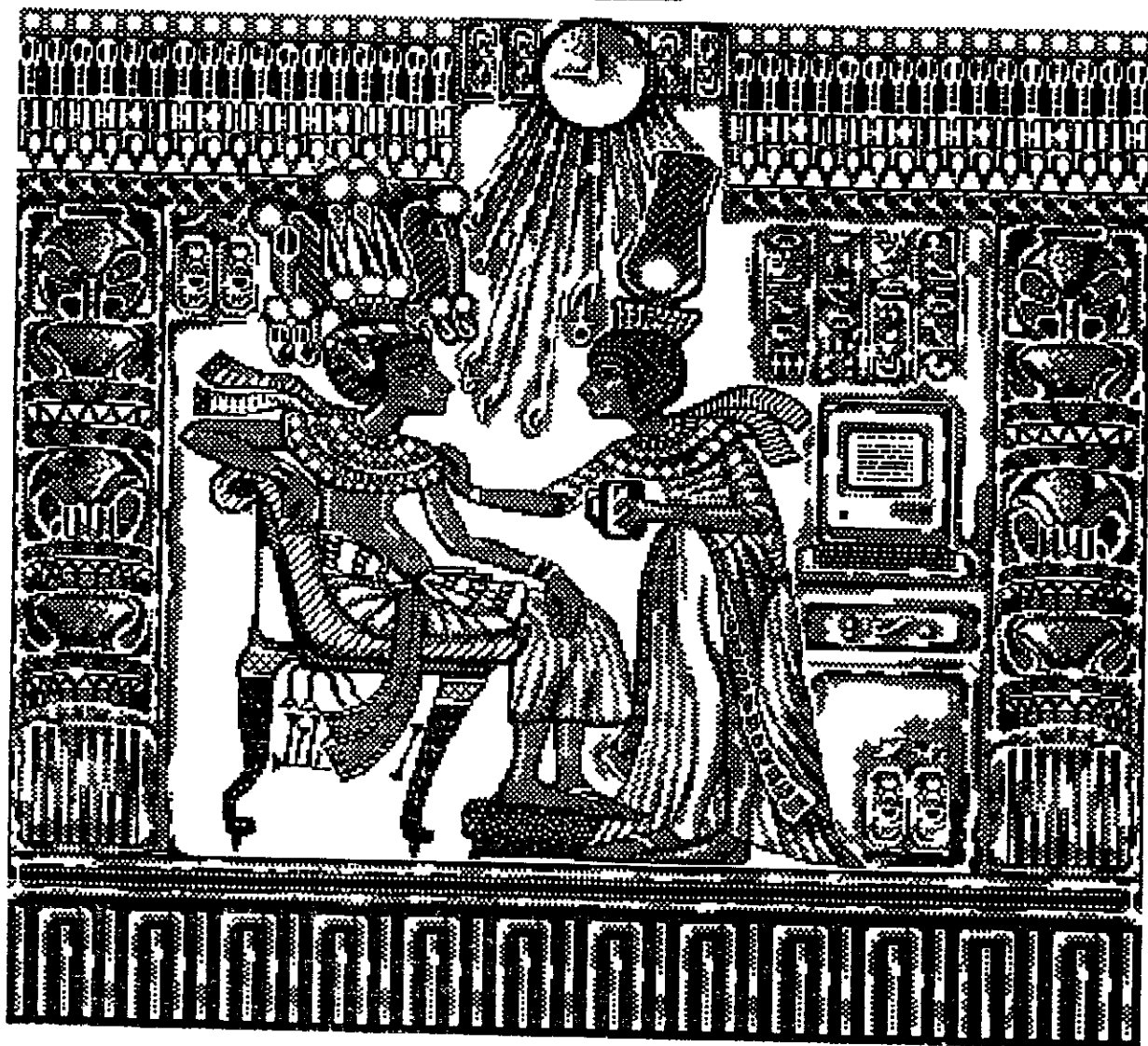
Curtis Taylor: I hope you got your *Magic Players Guide* back from your roommate. It's

ye be on page 4 swab

a bit of overload but the history of playtesting is very farcical.

today (Power Rangers, that stupid show by Shatner, and Babylon 5-although it's getting better).

Look Again



F. Bob: Howdy! I'm a professional paper shuffler myself.

Virgil Greene: I liked your disbelief article. I had never heard the idea of Glorantha being a Trickster illusion (very amusing). I agree that we are in a Golden age of sci-fi. The stories are generally better but don't forget the crap of

## Colophon

Aye, Matey-Vol. I, Issue IV was created on Ami Pro v. 3.01. Most of the graphics are provided via a cheap hand held Logitech scanner and most of the pictures are from various Dover books (also known as copyright free).

# REFUGEE #

$$(Y_{10}(\Pi))^{-2}$$

George Phillies  
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The contents of this zine include fiction and commentary. I will include *Communications* Letters to the Editor, in which I publish letters or comments from correspondents, if by some chance I ever receive one.

## Commentationes

*Editorial Page:* Yes, publish the accounts; it's the faanish way.

*The Log That Flies:* They Grey Company is an interesting approach. All these people showing up wanting to collect their debts. Enemies who are stronger than you are. A government that you don't want to meet. A building that you have never explored extensively. All sorts of elements of plot. Hideous demons from the ninth plane, also known as tax collectors.

I thought that your fiction was very good at setting a mood. Optimism and pessimism oscillate, until finally the world ends, more or less. I'm not sure how to interpret an image of part of the sun breaking off and falling to earth. I'm not sure that moodsetting works at novel length. Bradbury showed its merit at shorter sweep. I suppose people who insist on having everything explained to them would be confused. It sounds to me that the group you dealt with was not very useful at aiding new writers in their efforts.

wrto yr ct Dana Erlandsen, I much agree that she made vampiric characters sound far more interesting than is the norm. The campaign characters sounded attractive. It was not clear to me how this all turns into a campaign. Of course, one can simply be living in France in roughly the period of the Three Musketeers, which is a great adventure in itself, complicated only slightly by a distaste for wooden bullets or whatever.

I endeavored to run a Magic: The Gathering tourney for the Strategy Gaming Society, a National gaming group. I had no takers. I am impressed that individual cards are going for \$15. One wonders to what extent the people who run the operation are continuing supporting a chain of stores that sell primarily the very rare cards, fresh off the presses. Only a cynic would suggest that eventually there will be counterfeits.

*Session Notes:* Your essay on information is interesting. The Gamer suggests that TSR bought up RoleAids because TSR is trying to move away from Demonic themes, while Mayfair is moving toward them, and TSR wanted to promote homogeneity. GDW/Dangerous Journeys had the feature that the system did not appear to be very well received in many quarters, so that it perhaps was not that valuable a product line to GDW. On the other hand, I am not sure what GDW is trying to do; once upon a time it was a boardgaming outfit, but that appears to have changed.

It is noteworthy that the net reacts negatively to other uses. For example, the recent pair of attorneys who endeavored to post the same message onto all 9600 news groups managed to attract a great deal of attention to their efforts. It seems that the technical ingenuity that can be used to post the same message 9600 times can also be used to cancel the same message 9600 times, to mail the source machine so much material that it goes under or is not connected useful to receive messages from the net, or to generate hundreds of authentic-looking paper requests for material, bankrupting the source. On the other hand, it has occurred to people that a technique that is presently used to encourage an attorney to right behavior could also be used to encourage politically correct behavior in people who would naturally lack this inclination.

*The Pen & Sword:* 'The Pen is mightier than the sword' was written by a Victorian novelist by the name, if memory serves, of Bulwer-Lytton, who also gave us 'It was a dark and stormy night, and forty barefoot Indians...' His work is at present in Eclipse, while the work of Dickens enjoys a critical success it did not really know at earlier times. Matters will change. Consider, after all, the relative esteem accorded to J.S.Bach or Telemann.

The spell list was very different, but much more practical than some I've seen. I recall when Dungeons and Dragons was a new game, there would be occasional discussions of how one could use the available spells to better people's lives. This re-

quired conceiving of non-combat aspects of life in a D&D world. An amusing list of pseudomagic artifacts.

*Who is John Galt?* Not yet on the subscription list, he isn't. Mr. Galt, that is. It was never clear to me why AH purchased Runequest. They did not appear to do much with it, once they had bought it.

*The Slack Times:* Oh, F. Bob is another Wisconsin type. They're going to over-run us, which will certainly set a new style: most of the contributors to a Boston Apa will not be from Massachusetts. The review of Millenium's End was very interesting. It is remarkable to me how few people notice that there is a new millenium creeping up on us, a new millenium that many of us will live to see. Trauma and shock and bleeding effects? I suppose different people like different amounts of detail. It would be intresting to see a world like ours but brighter for a change. (In three years, I have lost four door locks on my car, all to epopel who force the lock and retreat from the inner defenses.)

*The Eight Track Mind:* Once upon a time, I watched every SF show on the air, which meant one show a year: Captain Zero or Superman or Rocky Jones Space Ranger or Commando Cody. Now we have a plethora of shows, few of which are as totally unbelievable as War of the Worlds (the Martians invaded 30 years ago, there is evidence that they are back, and no one is willing to listen? Even Congresscritters of the opposition party aren't that dumb.)=), and I have neither time nor interest in watching.

*The Unnamed Zine:* Rumor has it that Collie and friend will be descending on New England over Thanksgiving. I will be arranging some sort of a traditional New England get-together.

'Great, tell the story!' You asked what they want to hear. They told you. If you did not want to know, you should not have asked. (8-) But they would probably have told you anyway, players being players. 'It's a storyteller.' 'Is she telling stories about barmaids?' was the response waiting to happen. Of course, a good story is a compromise. If the GM is never interested in anything the players ask about, and vice versa, the campaign is unlikely to go anyplace. If the players always do exactly what the GM wanted, the GM may eventually get bored.

I am reminded, in your description of writing the history of the world, of the development of my

novel. I wrote episodic fragments, and am now putting them together. Star is much more fixated on getting the Namestone back than I thought. Cloud really hates Eclipse. Pickering has his primary objective firmly in mind at all times. For an example of a plot element, I have had retrodictive chronuplicators wandering around for some time, but only recently did I realize why they are critical to part of the plot. You create the pieces you want or need, and after a while everything falls into place.

## Communications

As some of you may realize, Canada differs from the United States in that it until recently has had no Bill of Rights, no tradition of judicial activism, and not quite an American image of Freedom of the press, leading to the following, which I recovered from Internet: (reprint by permission)

### CANADIAN GOVERNMENT CENSORS GAMES

From: ae062@FreeNet.Carleton.CA (Jennifer Clarke Wilkes)

On April 20, 1994, the Canadian Minister of Justice, Allan Rock, tabled draft amendments to the Criminal Code intended to protect society from the pernicious influence of so-called killer cards and games.

Canada has for some time been in the grip of national hysteria over this supposed threat to society, in particular the Serial Killer board game and the Eclipse Comics True Crime trading cards. A vocal opponent has been the mother of a serial killer victim (Debbie Mahaffey, mother of Leslie (in whose death Paul Teale and Karla Homolka are implicated). She is a very sympathetic figure and has been immensely helpful to groups opposed to "violence in entertainment" in Canada.

The board game in question is repeatedly described as killing babies. It isn't. It is about murder, but is a tongue-in-cheek effort aimed at a small adult market. It's expensive and handmade, with rather poor quality components, and not attractive to or even sold to children. Most important, it is no longer being produced (public outrage drove the game's creator out of his job and away from the city where he lived).

True Crime cards are also marketed to a small adult audience. No criminals profit from their



sale: all info on the cards is condensed from material in the public domain. Anyone can read all the gory details they want in a newspaper or "true crime" novel.

But for the sake of protecting Canada from this non-existent threat, the government would drastically limit minors' access to many harmless games, and place unreasonable restrictions on game dealers or social organizations where games are played.

The proposed law would make it a federal offence, punishable by stiff fines and/or up to two years in jail, to "sell or otherwise distribute" to anyone under the age of 18:

"(a) a card that was produced for commercial benefit, a dominant characteristic of which is a description or a pictorial depiction of an actual violent criminal or of an actual violent crime; or (b) a board game that was produced for commercial benefit, in which the players play the part of murderers and pretend to engage in violent criminal activity."

So, for example, the card game "Family Business", a humorous game set in the Chicago mob wars, would be illegal in several ways. The game cards have stylized representations of actual Chicago mobsters like Scarface, as well as actual crimes like the St. Valentine's day massacre. Also, the object of the game is to rub out the other gangs. Yet the game is quite harmless and can safely be played with children.

Any political board game in which assassination is a player option is at risk. A fantasy game like "HeroQuest" or "Dungeon!", which is in effect armed robbery and assault, is at risk. Maybe even playing the German side in a WWII war game is pretending to engage in violent criminal activity, since the Nazi leaders were convicted of crimes against humanity.

Role-playing games are not board games. However, if the tactical situation is represented by counters or figures on a map sheet, it is virtually indistinguishable in mechanics from a board game. Because of widespread public belief that these games involve plotting murders, they are at risk. The act of role-playing an assassin or a vampire, even if it is the game master controlling a non-player villain, would be illegal for minors.

The corollary amendments to these proposals are even more disturbing. The act of "distributing" – which is not narrowly defined and could include simply showing to or playing with – such materials

to a minor would be made an "enterprise crime". In other words, it would be treated as profiteering from crime and would expose a game dealer to the "search, seizure and detention" provisions of the Criminal Code. These allow the Crown to obtain a warrant to enter premises, seize and dispose of offending materials, and authorize fines equal in amount to the alleged profit, on pain of increasing prison terms.

It would not be a defence under the proposed law to claim that you thought the person you "distributed" offending material to was over 18, unless you take "all reasonable steps" to ascertain that fact. In other words, to ensure they are not subjected to potential charges, game stores, clubs and conventions would have to demand ID. This can only lead to self-censorship of stock and the barring of minors from gaming events, "just to be safe". It is an unreasonable limitation on minors' access to public places.

The Customs Tariff would also be amended to place these types of materials on the prohibited import list. In other words (and it actually says this), customs officials would be authorized to seize items at the border if their sale to minors would be illegal. Until the sale has actually been made, no offence has been committed, but customs officers are being told in effect to look into the future. This is completely unacceptable.

These amendments put a powerful legal tool into the hands of vocal anti-game and anti-violence groups, who can use it to harass law-abiding game vendors. Even if a game is ultimately found to be inoffensive, the vendor would be obliged to engage legal counsel and endure a protracted court battle, while his accusers would enjoy the publicly-funded services of the police forces and Crown attorneys.

At the age of 16, you are old enough to carry a gun into battle. You're old enough to drive a car. You're old enough to enter into sexual relationships. But you're apparently not old enough to be able to distinguish between imaginary "crimes" and real objectionable activity. You can go to the bookstore or library and pick up "Helter Skelter", but you can't play a game where the murders aren't even real. You can play in a murder mystery party game and pretend to be a murderer, but you can't do the same thing if you roll dice and move pieces around a board.

If you want more info on this, please drop me an e-mail. Those who wish to protest to the government can write to the Minister of Justice:

The Honourable Allan Rock, P.C., M.P. Minis-

ter of Justice House of Commons Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada K1A 0A6

Text of the draft amendments to the Criminal Code tabled April 20, 1994. Copies of the proposals are available from the Minister's office.

"Draft amendments to the Criminal Code and the Customs Tariff (crime cards and board games)

## CRIMINAL CODE

1. The Criminal Code is amended by adding the following after section 172:

172.1 (1) No person shall sell or otherwise distribute to a person under the age of eighteen years

(a) a card that was produced for commercial benefit, a dominant characteristic of which is a description or a pictorial depiction of an actual violent criminal or of an actual violent crime; or

(b) a board game that was produced for commercial benefit, in which the players play the part of murderers and pretend to engage in violent criminal activity.

(2) Every person who contravenes this section is guilty of

(a) an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years; or

(b) an offence punishable on summary conviction.

(3) It is not a defence to a charge under subsection (1) that the accused believed that the person to whom the sale or distribution was made was eighteen years of age or more at the time the offence is alleged to have been committed unless the accused took all reasonable steps to ascertain the age of that person.

2. Paragraph (a) of the definition "enterprise crime offence" in section 462.3 of the Act is amended by adding the following after subparagraph (v.1):

(v.2) section 172.1 (crime cards and board games),

## CUSTOMS TARIFF

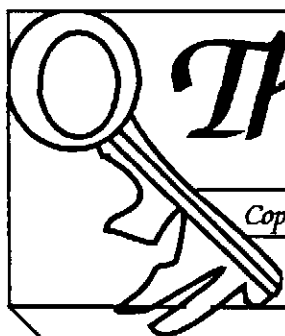
3. Schedule VII to the Customs Tariff is amended by adding the following after code 9968:

9969 Cards that were produced for commercial benefit, a dominant characteristic of which is a description or a pictorial depiction of actual violent criminals or of actual violent crimes, the sale or other distribution of which to persons under

the age of eighteen years is prohibited by section 172.1 of the Criminal Code.

9970 Board games that were produced for commercial benefit, in which the players play the part of murderers and pretend to engage in violent criminal activity, the sale or other distribution of which to persons under the age of eighteen years is prohibited by section 172.1 of the Criminal Code."

- Jennifer Clarke Wilkes  
(ae062@freenet.carleton.ca) CAR-PGa Canadian  
Director "For all your game defence needs"



# The Skeleton Key

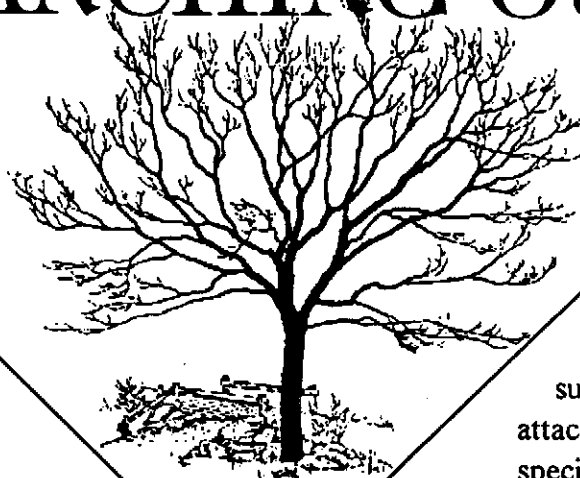
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June 1994

#9

## BRANCHING OUT



*Areas into which Interregnum might dare. Or in a more truthful vein, my personal opinions, plain and simple.*

My interests in gaming have always been more along the social engineering lines. I've heard it said more than once by members of The Wild Hunt that they see gaming as a sort of social laboratory where they can see how people react to situations that they most likely would never encounter (or want to encounter) in real life.

As Collie once commented, "I game for le gran passion." People caught in unusual and extreme situations, thrown out of their element and into the maelstrom. I suppose it is along the same lines that I game to play with ideas and to have fun. Much of that fun involves being subjected to stressors that I'd tend to avoid in real life.

Ideas will occur to me, situations or settings, and I'll sit down and scribble away, hoping someday to use them. Often they

gestate in my mind for weeks or months before ever coming into play. Sometimes they are ideas for characters, a sudden revelation how a character might react to a given situation, a cool new image or maybe just a name. Simple things that make up the tangled "webs of significance" that form my campaigns. (Again with apologies to Geertz.)

For the most part, game mechanics bore me. I'd much rather just game something out than say, "Wow! You rolled a 10! automatic success!) I prefer to discuss the issues tangled up in gaming, things that we've discussed in the past, but by no means exhausted.

My preference is towards

system-less writing. What I mean by this is writing about issues or ideas in such a way that they are not attached to one specific system. A specific genre is fine, as there are many systems that can be used to create a particular type of world. However I feel bad when I read through whole sections that people have written on a *single* game system and focused on lovingly detailed mechanics or perhaps rewriting those mechanics - when I'm either unfamiliar or uninterested in the system itself. I'm not belittling the place of structure in a game by any means, I feel that it is in everyone's best interests to tinker with game mechanics insofar as they are used to create the world the players interact in. But in a textual community where there are multiple game systems in use, and no clear agreement which one is best for which genre, it is more enjoyable to read about something that is not tied to specific system, and certainly easier to comment on.

# PBEM & TEXTUALITY REVISITED

*More observations and answers about PBEM and gaming:*

**Pete Maranci wondered how I might differentiate a PBEM run on a BBS from one run on the Internet:**

I wouldn't be able to differentiate an Internet based PBEM from a BBS based PBEM unless I was familiar with the BBS in question. I never cared enough about ARGUS (a slow Boston BBS) to learn more than the basic messaging protocols - but I suspect the biggest difference would be that it would be slower (given the hellish amount of time ARGUS users had to spend just to get on-line.)

**How did I recruit players?**

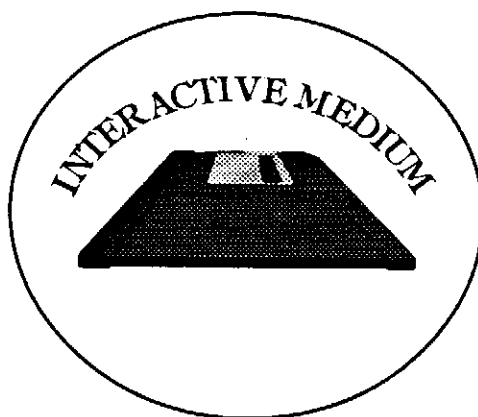
My preference for players in any game is for them to be friends of mine, or friends of friends, which usually, though not infallibly, leads to similar tastes in gaming styles. When I first conceived the idea for the PBEM, I simply sent off a mass announcement to as many friends as I could think of that might be interested, and let things sort themselves out from there.

At this point, although I have had several requests from other friends who have heard of the adventures and precarious lives of those travelling on the

Dauphin's Prize, I've keep it limited, especially as the current PCs are now fairly tightly interwoven, not to mention in dire straits. My "around the globe" comment was somewhat facetious - the farthest players live in California, the closest in New Hampshire.

**Notes on player participation:**

I think that a PBEM does require



a high level of participation from the players. After all, when your turn is done by electronic mail, it is all too easy to put it off and slow everything down. Thankfully I was able to find the sort of players that were either desperate enough or enthralled enough to post at least once per day. That is what has enabled the game to continue for as long as it has. All of the players are willing to contribute and keep things moving.

**Using IRC to game:**

IRC is a fascinating virtual medium - It is probably the next best thing to FTF for real-time high dynamic gaming. The original and main use of IRC is conversation. Sort of like a virtual bar with lots of little rooms, each devoted to their own topic. It can be quite addictive - but taken in moderation like any virtual medium, it can be used for gaming and writing out dialogue and events almost like a story.

This brings up a question that Virgil Greene asked in his last 8-Track mind - *if my PBEM was interactive literature or role-playing?*

I might be inclined to say a bit of both. I've described my IRC sessions to several people as interactive literature, which is apparently much easier to understand than the whole idea of role-playing. Really what I am doing is transforming what is primarily an oral genre into text that can be saved, altered and re-read at leisure. I think the fact that each player that has access to IRC writes only within the confines of their character consciousness (only what they feel and experience) shows that there is role-playing going on. It is only hidden by the flow of text between two disparate physical locations.

# Comments:

## GOING TO LIGHTSPEED?

*Lightspeed Interregnum?* A fascinating idea, though my intuition tells me that taking something like that on might make much more work for our editor than he ever intended. Perhaps Peter could advertise accepting zines by email, and then tell them where to send the money for their printed copy. Maybe that might snag a few people. In any event, I enjoy debating and conversing with others over the Net. This might because working in the lab as I do, I have to time to send off countless overblown electronic mail epistles. But hopefully my comments inspire reaction rather than deafening silence, and we can all use the electronic forum to trade ideas that we can print later.

### 8-Track Mind #2:

Thanks for the reviews on the SF series.

#### PCs above the law?

*"But of course in a Fantasy RPG the PCs are often robbers and murderers; it just gets justified because 'Dragons are evil, so we can kill them, take their hordes and make things out of their bodies.' It's pretty hard to have PCs that AREN'T criminals (though perhaps with reasons) in modern or near future RPGs."*

Here is a perfect topic for the Interregnum to tackle. Is this statement a valid generalization? Why or why not? What might factor into this world view, where PCs seem to become lawbreakers?

I think one thread common to all role-playing games is the implicit, and sometimes, explicit fact that the player characters are special people. Even if they are physically and mentally normal for their world (which often they aren't), and even if they start out in dull occupations (which often they don't) there is a sense that they are meant for something greater, that things, both great and terrible, will happen to them that would pass other lesser mortals by.

It is an inevitable outgrowth of the simple fact that the PCs are the focus of a campaign, a tale that needs telling. Does this mean that PCs have a tendency toward being involved in extra-legal behavior?

I don't think that PCs have to be lawbreakers - it just happens that through circumstance that many of them end up as vigilantes - pursuing the "greater good" (whatever that is) and breaking laws if necessary.

Now breaking laws is different from the simplistic view of "whatever it is, it is evil, so I can kill it." Unfortunately (or fortunately, I'm not sure) such moral labels are harder to affix in both real life and a complex campaign. I think the remnants of the old AD&D-alignment system where everything and everyone had an explicit alignment still exist in many games where the lines between Good and Evil are sharply and explicitly drawn.



## The Log #2:

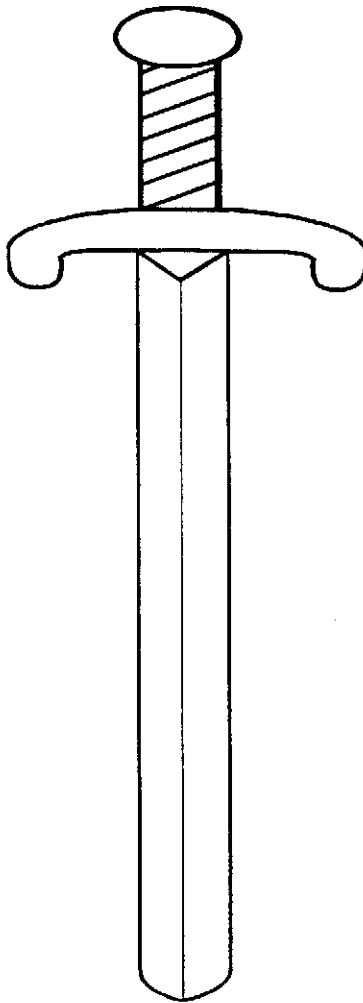
I liked your Gray Company Scenario. One personal quibble though has to do with the fate of the Senior Members of the Company. "inextricably trapped in the Big Rubble for a long and indefinite time period."

I'm not sure if this is how you intended it to come across, but there is nothing quite as annoying as having powerful allies "inextricably" held up. Now I realize my reaction may have something to do with the fact that when I first read it, I misread the word as "inexplicably" which would be beyond the pale. As it is, I would prefer them to be ghosts, and perhaps have the PCs travel to them for guidance, rather than informative visits every now and then. Seems too convenient.

The imagery in your Unchill story was wonderful: the singing familiar, the flower that wept crystal tears. All these small details enriched the story so that I could visualize some of the more fantastic sequences, which were my favorite. But what exactly was Sirene? I was left with this picture of a mermaid, or perhaps a manatee. A glossary would be a good thing, IMHO. ;-)

As far as my quotes go - every night that I run or play, I write stuff down in my notebook. The best ones get squirreled away

into the computer, then I randomly choose which ones to put into my zines. I think our humor stems from our irreverency - regardless of how serious we are taking the game at the moment, there is always room for one wisecrack about it.



One small problem with your Trap. Just because something is real doesn't mean the players would be necessarily that much more accepting of it, particularly in a fantasy world. Taking your example of the whole dungeon being an illusion - just because they found a note saying the whole thing was an illusion,

does that mean that the characters virtual world crashes down around them revealing their entombment in rock? I'm not so sure about that.

Illusions are essentially magical hallucinations, and such experiences can seem very real indeed to those who have experienced them. Case in point: When I was a child, I had to have some sort of dental operation performed. Whatever it was, I was given gas (nitrous oxide?) and for the longest time I swore afterward that during the operation I saw nurses wheeling patients about on a second floor balcony. The entire office was on one floor. Granted, this single example proves little except the amazing staying power of something that exists solely in the imagination. But it leads me to believe that unless there was conclusive proof that they were in an illusion, more proof than a simple I-told-you-so note, they'd be able to work themselves out of the dungeon just fine. Why? Because they'd have nothing but the word of an enemy that what they had experienced as reality for however many days was totally and utterly false. Sort of like having a nurse come over to you and inform you that you are actually a test subject for a new drug and the wonderful life you've led for the past two weeks is a dream - without doing anything else overt to unravel the fabric of your life. People have an amazing ability to believe what they want to - even when it flies in the face of accepted facts.

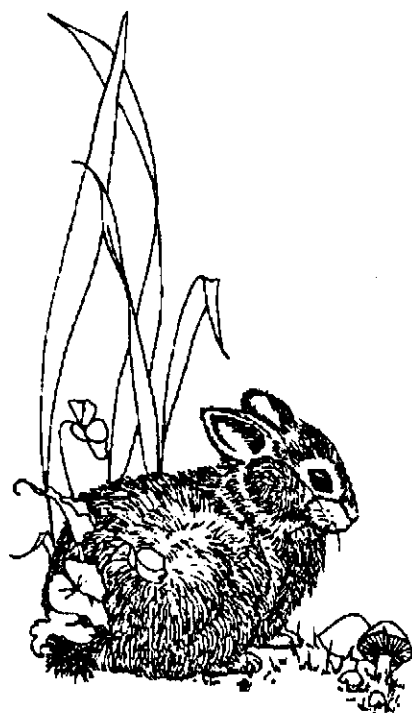
## Refugees:

My PBEM has been running since October and continues to evolve at a fast clip.

I enjoyed WSS? very much, probably even more than Pickering. This is most likely simply a matter of bias - I just am not partial to superheroes. But magic is different for some reason, and the short story seemed to hit the spot. Please let us see more of your short pieces.

## The Player:

I enjoyed your character sketches very much. The detail was wonderful - all too often NPCs are so flat and lifeless. You can tell when you've really created a complex character when it is remembered by the players after the game is over.



## The Pen & Sword #1

I'd be interested to hear more on Loskalmi Society, but it is hard for someone not acquainted with Glorantha to follow. For some odd reason, I liked the Color Glass spell - a simple magic that peasants of any magical land might undoubtedly create.

## Session Notes #16:

Welcome back! The idea of relationships as being the most important thing in the coming information age is one clearly shaped by post-modernist theory of relations being crucial to understanding any event.

I enjoyed your summation of Barlow's article (Wired, March 1994) and I agreed with your assessment that it is the relationship between the ref and the players that makes the game, not the plot.

I can see that in my PBEM game. It doesn't matter how fascinating or intricate my plot is, if the players don't contribute their viewpoint and effort, the game goes nowhere. It is only in the interaction between myself and the players that the game comes alive. Couple this with behind-the-scenes jokes, hidden queries and concerns, and it is easy to see why, even if I ran the same basic plot with another group it would turn out entirely different. I wouldn't want it any other way.

*Shh. Don't blow my secret identity as a poor college student! :-)*

## Who is John Galt#2

From the viewpoint of a student of anthropology, I was quite impressed with the GURPS Religion supplement. It spent a great deal of time on explaining crucial features of many world religions that could be incorporated into a mythical faith, in a fairly well organized manner that would be useful to any GM attempting to create a religion for their game. While aimed primarily toward the fantasy genre with the section on clerics and such, it does provide at least one example of a religion in a science fiction (psionic) setting.

## Slack Times #1:

Appreciated the review of Millenium's End.

It will be interesting to see what RTG does with Castle Falkenstein won't it? I've heard mumbles on the Net about RTG's Mekton Zeta, the third edition of the anime inspired mecha game, being released at Gencon. Maybe you and Doug could split reviewing CF and MZ? Pity those with insufficient cash to travel out to that far land.

Actually, if someone were to review Gencon, I'd be interested, never having been there, with little chance of attending in the near future. One can always hope I suppose. Or wish for money to grow on trees.

# THE EIGHT TRACK MIND

Ramblings on RPGs, SF, and Misc.

Issue #3

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Here we are with issue three and this time I even remembered to note the issue number! We're making progress. This time around we'll be covering virtually nothing that I told my associates I'd be covering. But hopefully I have something of interest for most everybody.

## OFFICIAL TOPIC: DREAMS

"It's a dream Alex! You can do anything you want in here!"-"Dreamscape"

Or can you do everything you want? It all depends on the time of dream. And for our purposes as gamers, it depends on what sort of model we want to try and what sort of story we're trying to evoke.

## THE ALTERNATE YOU

In H. P. Lovecraft's story, "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" it is suggested that for at least some people some dreams are actually the reflection of a greater consciousness. One character in the story is slow-witted in his waking form but when the viewpoint character listens in on his dreams through a sort of telepathy machine he learns that his "real" form is a sort of being we perceive as a star. A campaign along these

lines would have the players creating two characters; one a more or less ordinary modern person, the other a resident of a fantastic reality. It might be a problem keeping the party members synchronized, but who's to say that the alternate personae are on the same exact time line as their mundane world counterparts?

## ANOTHER REALITY

Lovecraft's "Dreamlands" stories assume that for those who go beyond normal sleep there is a land just as real as our own. It can even be reached physically from certain points on Earth. While dreamers do "create" areas in the Dreamlands, it is more than just the products of one person's mind. It is possible for people to continue living in the Dreamlands after they've died in the "real" world. The classic story of course is The Dreamquest of Unknown Kadath in which Randolph Carter seeks out the gods of Earth in order to reach his lost dream city. Chaosium has produced a Dreamlands supplement for their Call Of Cthulhu RPG.

One could also treat the Alternate Reality of Dreams as a sort of shared subconscious. While it isn't "real" in the sense of being a physical place it has a

certain amount of reality as the dreaming minds of all humanity (and maybe other creatures?) contributes to it. A campaign here becomes a sort of psychological adventure or quest for common archetypes. One could treat some RuneQuest Hero Quests as adventures of this nature as the characters struggle to recreate the mythic adventures of their gods and heroes and bring out strengths within themselves. Of course this would be sort of a "vision quest", perhaps with ritual spells or potions to assist. It may possible that in the vision quest the whole mythic reality could be altered.

One possibility is a false reality, say a sort of computer program or game that is so complete that you may well not know that it isn't reality. Best example I can think of off hand is a *Red Dwarf* episode entitled "Welcome to Reality"; I won't give details since this is a great episode that all should see but too much info will spoil it. Let's just say that reality may be a game and a game may be reality.

## ANOTHER MIND

You'll remember that I opened this discussion of dreams with a quote from the movie "Dreamscape", in which Kevin Costner (before he danced with wolves) played a psionic who becomes involved in a research project to enter into people's dreams. The original intent is psychological therapy, but the real backers of the project have far less benevolent things in mind. Roger Zelazny wrote some stories involving telepathic entry into dreams also.

Now one difference here is that we don't have some of the limits that we have if a dream is an alternate personality or an alternate reality. It should be possible to act in a person's dream as if you were in one of your own "lucid" dreams. When you are in a dream, and realize it, you can suddenly do a lot of things. In my own experiences, I've never managed great reality changes but I have been able to do impossible things like flapping my arms and flying away. Some folk apparently can alter the whole of the reality. Zelazny's therapists do such things as creating and destroying Atlantis as a part of dream therapy. Picture your telepathic PCs searching for information in a villain's mind and having to fight through the demon's of the person's mind.

The problem of course is that the characters technically can do anything they can think of, how do you GM that?

## ALTERNATE COP OUTS

One thing that could be tried is the idea that the reality that the characters have experienced was only a dream. The sort of thing that the Prime time soap *Dallas* did to get rid of a bad season. It might be used as a way of reviving a party that found themselves way over their heads and got killed through GM error. Or it could be used seriously as a major plot element.

## ALTERNATING PLOTS

I'd guess that GMs generally use dreams as a way to introduce new plotlines or to provide information. I've done that

myself by having a wizard from one planet visit a PC in his dreams. I've also (clumsily) used a dream as a way to get a PC possessed by a hostile force to complicate things for the party. One could have a whole profession of professional dreamers who see the future through dreams, I suppose.

Overall, I'd say it would be very difficult to do a whole campaign in a dream, but dreams have potentials to be adventures or adventure hooks.



## WHY NOT THESE AS RPGS?

Considering how Steve Jackson Games seems to want to have one million licensed products, and seeing how other companies also produce stuff based on books and other media, I decided to throw out some ideas for new licensed RPG products. Of

course one can also just read the books and come up with their own adaptation; this exercise is left to the reader. I should note that I originally posted this on the Argus BBS in the Boston Metro back in January 1992; I've modified and updated it since then, plus I deleted a suggestion for a Known Space RPG. I've picked up the Ringworld RPG and the Ringworld Companion since then and I've learned that it did indeed include enough info to run a non-Ringworld Known Space campaign. Too bad it wasn't successful.

### \* The Inquestal Saga (4 books) by Somtow Sucharitkul

These stories are set in the very distant future. Mankind is scattered around the Galaxy. Over the various worlds rules the Inquest. Inquestors are pretty much Immortal, and have command of incredible wealth and power. The Inquest in theory is seeking Utopia, but in actuality seeks to prevent false utopia, or stagnation. They fight wars destroying whole worlds to this end. These are generally part of a game called Makrugh, a sort of power game the Inquestors play constantly. What most Inquestors don't realize is that the Inquest itself is a false utopia. Ultimately, there is a war between those who want the Inquest reformed, and those opposed to change.

The gaming angles?

PC's could be Inquestors, assessing a world to determine if it is a false utopia.

PC's could be players in a big game of Makrugh.

PC's could be on one side or another in the War.

### \* Mallworld by Sontow Sucharitkul

In the not so distant future, aliens place our solar system as far as the orbit of Saturn into a sort of quarantine. Humanity is forced to realize that they are a small, immature species as far as the rest of the galaxy is concerned.

But humanity is spread all over the system. And the largest shopping center in it is Mallworld, a space station/colony that houses all the usual shopping mall type businesses. Plus such fun things as suicide parlors, places to buy children, and things that are less tasteful. Could be a supplement to a space RPG or maybe a Cyberpunk RPG.

### \* The World of Tiers by Phillip Jose Farmer

The Earth, and all know Earths, are artificial constructs. The race that built the Earths are from such a construct, and only found out when their first interstellar probe crashed into the edge of the universe, not much past Pluto.

They learned how to make pocket universes. The World of Tiers is one of the not very earthlike ones. It is like a ziggurat, with different cultures on different levels.

There are some similarities to the Amber books, from what I understand. PC's could be dwellers in the various worlds, or they could be the overlords, fighting other overlords as these folk do.

### \* Super Mario Brothers by Nintendo

Why not? There's been a cartoon, umpteen games since old Donkey Kong, and there's been a movie. Why not an RPG? Of course now White Wolf is going to be producing a Street Fighter RPG using a modified version of the Storyteller system, so this isn't as absurd an idea as when I first suggested it.

### \* Dr. Sues stories by Dr. Sues

A surrealistic world setting. Everybody talks in rhyme, and with lots of nonsense words. No killing or death. Just a very strange experience.

### \* Dune by Frank Herbert

There's been a board game, but no RPG. Might work.

Ok, these are my ideas, anybody else got a pet book, movie, or whatever you'd like to see as an RPG or supplement?

## BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND!

Well, actually not. George Phillies noted that I should have provided addresses for the RPG magazines I mentioned in issue one so that people could subscribe. While I think people should get the magazines the way Nature intended (at a game or book store :-)) here's the addresses. These are from the latest copies of the magazines I have on hand as of May 26, 1994. Things may have changed.

### \* DRAGON



TSR, Inc. P.O. Box 5695 Boston, MA  
02206

I suspect that this is a regional distribution address for New England, but I could be wrong.

A subscription costs \$30 for one year in the US, \$36 in US funds sent to a Canadian address, 21 pounds sterling to a UK address, and 30 pounds to a European address, and \$50 in US funds to any other address by surface mail or \$90 air mail to any other address.

#### \* WHITE WOLF

White Wolf Magazine 4598b Stonegate Industrial Park Stone Mountain, GA  
30083-9918

A year's subscription costs \$28 in the US, \$38 in Canada, and \$58 for overseas via surface mail. They don't appear to have any special subscription rates.

#### \* PYRAMID

Steve Jackson Games P.O. Box 18957  
Austin, TX 78760-9844

A subscription costs \$23.70 per year or \$45 for two years (\$6 extra per year to Canada and Mexico, \$18 extra per year overseas). This is for six issues a year as opposed to twelve per year for Dragon and White Wolf.

#### \* CRYPTYCH

ILM International Inc. 30617 US Hwy.  
19 N. Suite 700 Palm Harbor, FL 34684  
USA

A six issue subscription cost \$14.95 to a US address, \$22.95 (Canadian) to a Canadian address, and \$40 (US funds) for overseas air.

#### \* CHALLENGE

Challenge P.O. Box 1646 Bloomington,  
IL 61702-1646

A six issue subscription is \$15 in the US and Canada and \$30 for overseas by surface mail.

#### \* VORTEX

Uhhh, well...I think they've moved, if they're even still active. But here's the last address I have.

Vortex 1066 28th Street Oakland, CA  
94608

Subscriptions were \$10 for four issues per year in the US. Subscriptions in Canada cost \$5 more and subscriptions in Asia, Europe, and the Pacific Rim cost \$16 more. If they're still active, I suspect that the prices have changed.

They also accepted E-mail on GENie addressed to VORTEX. I've not seen an issue in the stores for quite some time, but there was a mention of them on one of the Usenet RPG groups; that's where it was also mentioned that they moved. It'd be unfortunate if they ceased publication.

#### \* SHADIS

Shadis Subscriptions 17880 Graystone  
Ave. #203 Chino Hills, CA 91709

A six issue subscription is \$21 in the US and \$25 in Canada (US funds only) and a twelve issue subscription is \$42 in the US and \$50 in Canada.

I find it interesting that while all of these magazines have overseas rates, only Pyramid acknowledges the existence of Mexico; it's not exactly "overseas" after all. Perhaps being in Texas they are more conscious of a Mexican market; or maybe they sell well in Latin American countries. GURPS is apparently the biggest RPG in Brazil.

I think that the "must haves" are Cryptych for its company newsletters, Shadis for its variety, and Pyramid for its goofiness and Murphy's Rules. If Vortex still exists, pick it up for the Guidance Ro-Man. And of course if you play White Wolf games you need their magazine and you need Dragon if you play TSR games. Challenge is pretty good if you're into SF RPG gaming. I pick them all up except for Dragon, generally.

## LOOKING BACKWARD

I will note that my SFTV impressions were perhaps a bit shallow, but I was trying to give my general impressions of the various series rather than in depth analysis. I neglected to comment on *Sea Quest DSV*, but I only saw the pilot. It came across to me as pretty much "Sea Trek". I notice that some folk really dislike it, and thus fear for the future of *Dr. Who* in the hands of Amblin Entertainment.

Speaking of *Dr. Who* and Amblin Entertainment, I've finally seen in print a conformation that there is indeed a deal with the BBC. According to *DWB*, the agreement was signed in March. We may see a new series in 1995 and it would be a continuance of the original series; it would have the same history as the old series and the new Doctor will be the eight Doctor.

I didn't mention the great British series *Red Dwarf* either, since I was focusing on American SFTV. Watch for probably the only successful SF comedy series on your PBS stations.



## COMMENTS ON INTERREGNUM #2

\* Editorial Page: Peter Maranci

On the notion of an electronic edition of *Interregnum*: This is the way of the future, and at Pyramid they're already talking about doing that in a few years. Once a "viewpad" like the one in *2001: A Space Odyssey* affordable we may see the end of the paper magazine. It is a little early for that now though.

On finances: What would be published and why would it be published? It doesn't

strike me as being anybody's business, frankly.

**\* The Log That Files #2: Peter Maranci**

I find it interesting that you're writing mostly about AD&D style illusions which are "real" until they're disbelieved. Interesting notions though.

On The Grey Company: I think it is highly possible that the player characters would simply leave unless the oaths they took were incredibly binding. They are in a pretty much no-win situation; the easiest way out is to just let the old apprentices take over.

On Unchill: This is better than a lot of stuff I've seen in professional magazines; you might want to send it to *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. It might need a little padd...uhh, fleshing out.

On Light Bulb Jokes: I'm not sure who started off the light bulb jokes; I know I posted a bunch on Argus that sort of illustrated the differences and flaws of various systems. I think I may have been inspired by one by writer John Barnes at WorldCon '89, "How many *Analog* writers does it take to change a light bulb? One to change the bulb and one to say "Of course the light bulb was invented by Thomas Edison in ...".

**\* Session Notes: Douglas E. Jorenby #16**

While I've felt that modules should be very helpful and useful in producing a fleshed out world; I've never used a purchased module. Not sure why. I think

you're quite right about the virtues of familiarity; why else does anybody still play AD&D? :)

**\* The Pen and Sword: Mark Sabalauskas**

On Fronela: Hey, somebody's got to develop it :) It makes sense that the coinage would reflect the casts of Western society. I'd probably end up adding Malkioni Anabaptists and really set myself up for getting "Gregged".)

**\* Who is John Galt?: Curtis Taylor**

On *Strangers in Prax*: Is the Jonathan Tweet who wrote *Barren the Monster Killer* the same guy who wrote *Ars Magica* and left White Wolf to join Wizards of the Coast?

**\* The Slack Times: F. Bob Mosdal**

Millennium's End does look interesting. I find it interesting that combat is very detailed in a "non-combat" game; still, I suppose that's better than having inadequate mechanics and claiming they encourage role-playing.

**\* The Unnamed Zine: Collie Collier**

Great stuff on timelines. I drew up a timeline for my "Shifted Lands" campaign, but realized after we got started that I had a human timeline, but not one for the various other races that shared the new world with humans. I ended up, well, fudging.

**\* Refugee #11: George Phillies**

On Jori's Misfortunes: Actually, I stayed in the game after Jori left. My new character didn't have the handicaps that

Jori had; but I didn't get as into him as I did with Jori. The main frustration (other than the 'newt conflict) was not really solving his quest; we fudged. I guess I was supposed to come up with an answer and convince the GM that it would work; but this requires "GM empathy", a skill I'm not good at. I don't read people well so coming up with something to convince another person is difficult for me. One of the reasons I'm no fan of "diceless" games; I think if you express yourself well and know what the GM wants you'll be successful but if you don't and just try to roleplay your character you won't.

## NEXT ISSUE

Hopefully, it will be our Media Issue as we say good bye to STNG on TV and try to use *Highlander* style Immortals in RPGs. Also comments on Magic:The Gathering's Legends boosters and any other game stuff I pick up.



# Session Notes #17 Douglas E. Jorenby



## The Kids Are Alright

Without question, the hottest role playing product at last August's GenCon was White Wolf's newest addition to their **Storyteller** system, **Mage**. When the copies arrived on Saturday, people were lined up 8 to 10 deep, buying them as quickly as the White Wolf people could take in money. I didn't bite, despite having a very surreal conversation about "lyrical violence" with **F. Bob Mosdal** and his fellow St. Olaf College alumnus, **Mark Rein-Hagen**. My major find of the convention was a new product from R. Talsorian Games called **Cybergeneration (CG)**.

CG is presented as a "gameworld" for use with RTG's **Cyberpunk 2.0.2.0**. That strikes me as a bit deceptive, since someone with a basic role playing familiarity could take the material presented in the CG book and run a campaign. To fork out the money for the gameworld and also have to buy the base system (only a fraction of which will be used) seems excessive for entry-level gamers. It seems that CG is oriented towards those who already own and run **Cyberpunk (CP)**.

This impression was reinforced during the RTG seminar that F. Bob and I attended. **Mike Pondsmith** spoke at some length about the new gameworld and all the things he hoped it would become. His comments about the course of development touched on complaints I have heard from many other gamers that cyberpunk as a genre was too focused on heavy weapons, backstabbing, and ultraviolence. (A quick scan of Usenet's rec.games.frp.cyber can confirm this ☺) Pondsmith's goal in creating CG was to create a setting with fewer big guns, more role playing elements, and perhaps a bit more hopeful slant, while still retaining the essential "feel" of the cyberpunk genre.

The world of CG is a direct progression from the bleak 2020 setting of CP. In 2027, government in the former United States is essentially just a front for a powerful group of transnational corporate interests (the ISA -- Incorporated States of America). The anarchy spawned by the heavily-armed Edgerunners of the early 2020s has been reduced somewhat by means of heavy police/military repression. Technology has advanced from the time of CP as well, particularly in the area of nanotechnology. *Somehow* (the ambiguity is deliberate) a rogue strain of nanotech was released into the environment, spawning what is known as the Carbon Plague. For adults, this nanotech virus produces no change in 80% of those infected, while 20% die horribly. In those under the age of 20, 70% show no change and 30% mutate into one of 5 types of "cyberevolved" individuals.

**Ambiguity:** The release of the Carbon Plague may have been due to an industrial accident, due to deliberate intervention by one or more Artificial Intelligences, or may even be the prelude to an alien invasion. How's *that* for a nasty cluster of plot hooks?

**Splatguns:** Those familiar with CP will recognize the nasty potential of these weapons. Heh. Heh. Heh.

**TFOS:** This easily wins my award for the most hilarious set of rules to read.

**BFGs** = Big Frackin' Guns. You know the type. They are often found in the hands of munchkins.

The "Evolved" kids are a major hook for the new book. Essentially, the Carbon Plague has mutated select individuals into teenagers with the equivalent of superpowers. For example, **Tinmen** can reshape their body parts into tendrils, or exude techno-organic armor, and **Bolters** are like human tasers, able to shoot a hexite chainwire from their bodies and deliver an electric charge through it. It's not quite superhero genre, and it's not quite the magic of **Shadowrun**, but it seems designed to appeal to players who might find those other genres attractive.

A number of the game mechanics have been simplified as well. Rather than the large skill lists of CP, each PC has only 11 skills (plus a special role skill). The standard equipment lists are much smaller than their CP counterparts, with less emphasis on invasive cyberwear and heavy weapons. In fact, many of the available weapons are of the melee variety, bows, or "splat" guns. Much more attention is given to the sorts of electronic accessories teenagers carry, having a cool way to get around town, and having hot clothes to be seen in.

Combat really shows the "lite" nature of the CG rules. Mike Pondsmith has never recovered from the pun addiction he developed while writing **Teenagers From Outer Space**, as can be seen in this book. The combat system in CP is called "Friday Night Firefight." Based on a large amount of hard data from police and FBI sources, it is justly feared among experienced players as lethal and nasty. In CG we find a streamlined and more cinematic (i.e., less deadly) version called, "Saturday Night Skuffle." <groan> Pondsmith has linked the two combat systems more effectively than the supposedly compatible systems of CP and **Mekton II**. I haven't put SNS to the trial of combat, but it looks smooth enough to run well if you don't mind losing some of the realism of FNFF.

Major shootouts are not meant to be a primary focus of CG. After all, PCs will be teenagers or children, most armed with air pistols or slingshots (if that). Even the most grim Arasaka combat drone is going to think twice about emptying his/her full-auto combat shotgun at a kid (esp. if there are media people within 40 or 50 clicks). Pondsmith's goal is to take BFGs out of the pool of potential solutions and throw players back on using street-smarts, trickery, indirect strategies, and <gasp!> *role playing*.

In theory, I think this is a fabulous idea. It's just the sort of game I enjoy running -- one where the cleverness of the players is much more



Teenagers From Preppy  
Space?



**Internet:**

dej@ctrl.medicine.wisc.edu

important than seeing who can minimax the combat rules to the nth degree. In reality, though, I think Pondsmith is preaching to the choir. The typical guns & mayhem CP player is not going to be lured away to play almost unarmed kids, even if some of them can function as human tasers. RTG recognizes this, and is careful to maintain that CG is a parallel plot development. They are still in the business of selling **Chromebooks** to the metalheads.

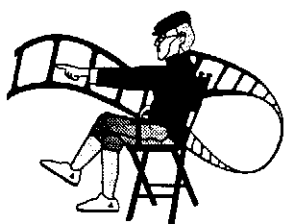
Will "real" role players flock to CG? I have my doubts. First of all, it's possible to do excellent role playing in standard CP. I've seen it happen on quite a few occasions, with a variety of different players. It doesn't require new rules and a new setting. All it takes is a world where violence has realistic consequences and you tend to make things worse, rather than better, when you pull a gun. Second, I'm not sure that the people who are turned off by the perception of cyberpunk as an ultraviolent genre will make the effort to explore CG (since they also have to buy the parent game). Third, it is *damn* difficult to play kids well in a role playing game. Running a comedy game like TFOS, I found that only the best role players were able to make their teenagers act and react at all like real teens. Playing younger children can be even more difficult. I've often pondered that very issue while reading the installments of **George Phillis'** "Pickering..." opus. Some people who commented on the story took exception with the way the young characters were sketched; I kept my mouth shut because it's a very difficult thing to write. So although CG has a great deal of potential for excellent role playing, I think it's doomed to be largely unrealized potential for the reasons noted above. Overall, I'd have to say "the runner stumbles" on this one.

## Comments On Interregnum #2

**Maranci:** Now what are the odds of you deciding to print *The Grey Company* in your zine and me choosing it as an example in the same issue? The mind boggles....

As regards writing groups and "Unchill": Have you ever heard a wonderful song Harry Chapin wrote about 20 years ago called "Mr. Tanner"? It could be worth listening to, Pete. With the rare exception of groups of successful writers who come together after the fact, most writers' groups I've seen or heard of serve to stagnate and frustrate their members more than anything else. It sounds as if the group you ran





Sequels! I must have more sequels!

#### Economies Of Scale:

**JB:007** was an interesting game in many respects other than the vehicle chase system. However, it never really caught on, despite some loving adaptations of the original material. More so than most other RPGs, it was very hard to accommodate multiple players.

afoul of were as conservative as a bunch of Hollywood producers. So what if you can't distill your story into a single line? Can you render James Joyce's *Ulysses* in a single line? T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*? "Unchill" was a fine piece of atmospheric writing. If you enjoyed creating it and it came close to evoking the mood you desired, what more do you need? The next time the thought of those silly people keeps you from writing, go watch the first 20 minutes of Robert Altman's *The Player*. That should remind you of the absurdity of reducing art to a single-line "pitch."

**Sabalauskas:** Welcome to *Interregnum*! I'm not a **RQ** player, but I enjoyed getting a glimpse of some of the background for your campaign. Great additions to Scott's 1970s **M:tG** cards, too. I hope that you'll fill us in on your desktop video interests in a coming zine. That's an area I'd like to know more about.

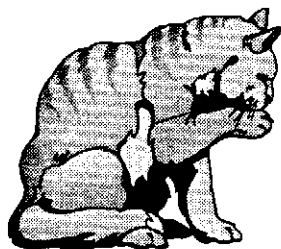
**Taylor:** May I put in a request for a more comprehensive review of **GURPS Religion**, once you have the chance to go through it in depth? I was very surprised when I saw the title on the "New Board" at Pegasus Games, but your mini-review alleviates some of that confusion.

**Mosdal:** Welcome to *Interregnum*! And what a great title! Bwahahahahaha! Are you in any way related to the fabled **J. R. Bob**? © Thanks for the very informative review of **Millennium's End**. I was intrigued with the plastic overlays used in the combat system. Have you experimented with these to see how they work in play?

Of all the rules I have worked with over the years, one of the best systems I found for handling vehicle chases was the Victory Games **James Bond:007** set. The two sides would make increasingly difficult bids, until one side (in effect) said, "OK...name that tune!" It insured that chases were dramatic and held the interest of participants.

**Greene:** Great summary of the current sf on television. Until I started reading your list, it really hadn't sunk in just how much was currently being done. Would you include "Lois & Clark" in the mix? I guess it's debatable whether a superhero is sf or not -- but Teri Hatcher certainly qualifies as fantasy material. ;)

When I was in Scotland in March, I happened to be channel surfing and came across an episode of "ST:TNG" on a German satellite channel. What a hoot! It had been dubbed *auf Deutsche*, such that everyone on



Of course, the only True  
Point-Of-View is the Cat  
Point-Of View. ☺

the crew sounded like Worf. ☺ I haven't kept up with either of the ST series, but I am enjoying "Babylon 5" a great deal. The acting leaves a bit to be desired, but the universe is much more interesting than ST's. I like the grittiness and the political intrigues that are beginning to form, as well as the fact that many of the moral issues they raise are not neatly resolved with New Age platitudes by the end of the hour.

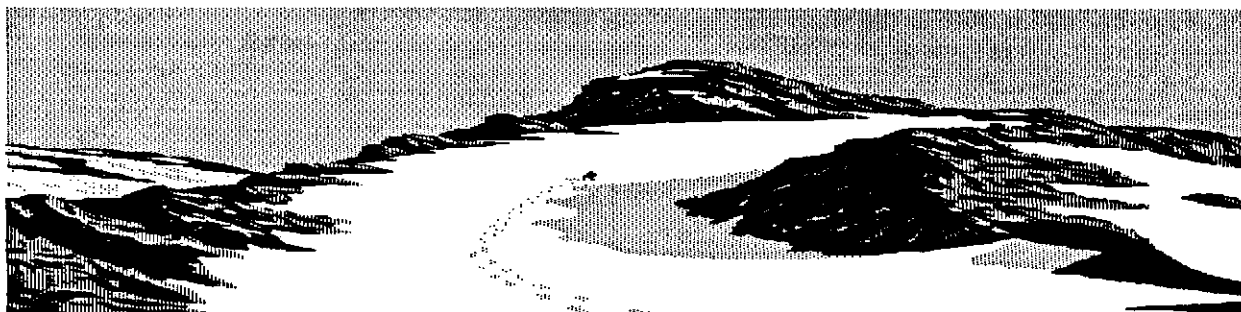
**Collier:** Welcome to *Interregnum*, Collie! Very interesting thoughts on the use of timelines to set the stage for players and provide a structure for the campaign. I particularly liked the use of subjective point-of-view for the two cultures. When you think about it, virtually everything we learn is wrapped within a cultural context. And yet, how often do RPG backgrounds take an omniscient point-of-view? It makes for great role playing to provide the characters with a culture-bound version of The Truth, then let them discover on their own that other people may see things quite differently. Great job!

**Phillies:** Excellent work on the second installment of "WSS." I really like the interplay you're developing between the New Faith and the Old Faith. The scene with the barrow wight was particularly effective. I hope that there is more to come in future issues.

Thanks for the kind words regarding the layout, as well. I wanted to experiment with something a bit different from a balanced column layout. Glad to hear it met with some approval.



*May your summer be filled  
with Indolent Pleasures*



# DISTANT DEEPS AND SKIES

© Lois Folstein June 1994 86 Ellery St., Cambridge, MA 02138, (617) 491-4150  
issue #1 Dreams? They complicate my life.



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## AN ACTOR PREPARES

*Roleplaying games and acting—an endorsement*

**F**antasy roleplaying games, especially tabletop games, have provided a surprisingly effective medium for keeping me in practice as an actor during those periods of theatrical down time which are frequent and frustrating. I didn't realize that this would be so until I got involved in a pretty interesting theater project after a long interval when I hadn't been acting but had been playing continuously in an RPG. What I noticed then was that during rehearsals I seemed able to almost instantly visualize the setting of the scene that we were working on with a vividness that I had never experienced before. I didn't doubt at the time that this was a result of all the improvisation that we had been doing in the RPG. My mind was becoming practiced at filling in a visual around me and more than a visual, also the feeling of the weather, ambient sounds, smells, and also some of the emotional considerations of the character.

I think that this improvement may have been so marked because I hadn't anticipated it happening. Even though the connection between roleplaying and acting is obvious, I hadn't joined a game for acting practice and hadn't intended to hone my craft (an expression that really annoys me, by the way)

with the game. And so— to have a deep, vivid setting pop up around me at the rehearsal, like images seen with the Magic Eye, was a very pleasant surprise. And I've been noticing that my ability at improvisation has continued to improve. It's exc!

## INTRODUCTION TO DOPPELGANGER

**I** was excited at the idea of doing the following story for Interregnum. It does have distant RPG connections: someone in our game group, George, reacquainted some of us, and introduced to me, the works of H.P. Lovecraft and got us interested in Andrew French's MACABRE, a local (Boston) Lovecraft fanzine. The group playtested a game that George developed for a Macabre contest and really enjoyed it. It was called "Honey! I'm Home!" and was about a woman who was continually being plagued by her dead husband and other annoyances. It did win the contest.

I felt at home in the genre (which should tell you something about me) and wrote a story which ended up in the Macabre Valentine's Day edition. I then wrote another story, not published, which I hope to revise sometime soon, and on a similar subject. And here, today, is another story, which I

just finished and is third in the series that I refer to as "Tales of Love in the Elder Days."

# DOPPELGANGER DOLEFUL VOICES

by L. Folstein

"Who has fascinated you?  
The eye, the thought, and the evil desire.  
Who will remove the fascination?  
The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."  
—from an Italian ritual to cure the evil eye

*From the pen of the Chronicler:*

*The Order of the Sacred Heart is a brotherhood of monks who are dedicated both to contemplation and to service in the fields of scholarship and medicine. These are the case notes of Brother John Valence who served at Arkham General Hospital. As was typical of the brothers of his order he held no degree in medicine or social work, yet was often called to attend certain cases because of his unusual skill with hypnosis. John was often attached to the dental clinic and burn center where he used the gift to help patients control anxiety and pain. The following are some of John's own notes from an assignment he had in the psychiatric pavilion:*

Case notes 4/16/61. Martin R., a patient in Admitting, described as a twenty-one year old unmarried male graduate student at Miskatonic University. Hospitalized for episodes of intense fear and panic. There is no previous history of mental disorder. Up to the time of illness he had been teaching and working on a research project in local history. Described by family and colleagues as a promising scholar with an original viewpoint and somewhat charismatic personality, though perhaps lacking in confidence. Family noticed a dramatic change of personality roughly two weeks previous to hospitalization: he was described as uncommunicative, driven, pale, nervous, fearful, and eventually agoraphobic. The patient when I saw him exhibited signs of extreme anxiety with accelerated breathing, heart rate, and cold

clammy skin. I spent the session talking to him in a calm and reassuring manner, and introduced some preparatory suggestions of safety and relaxation.

4/18/61 Spent the next two sessions preparing for hypnotic induction and establishing a comfortable rapport.

4/19/61 Induced trance and suggested to M. that he talk to me as he would to a sympathetic colleague. He managed to express his belief that his current state was due to a recent romantic involvement. Love had generated a "painful destructive force". The force had "latched itself" into his being. He spoke of having trouble breathing. He said that he felt as if part of his identity was being stolen and stated that this was like being murdered. I assured him that he was quite safe and would soon be well.

4/20/61 Induced a hypnotic state and further explored the source of Martin's trauma. He told me that he was captivated by a very fascinating woman but felt unworthy of her. He described the woman as full of wit and grace. She worked for the University Press. He had met her at a colloquy but felt that she had at once dismissed his suit. He was distressed by this. He told me, very ashamedly, that her notice, her approval, had become vital to him. He began arranging his schedule to increase his chances of seeing her. He was forever looking for her name. He thought about her constantly and involuntarily. He was racked with curiosity about her life and began to follow her about to "find out things about her".

When asked what sort of things a catalogue then followed: what she would read and eat. Where she shopped. Who she knew. Her conversations. What she wore. How she walked and stood and sat. How her day was spent. Martin felt a deep desire to share her life. The crisis point for Martin came when he followed the woman to a student haunt and not only felt alienated from her world of students and artists and all their cheerful banter, but also discovered that she had a lover. This discovery made him very depressed and humiliated but did not lessen his compulsion to follow her (in order to do what? Obtain some type of sanctioning for his life?). Patient had trouble remembering the days that followed this incident. He constantly thought

of the woman and felt overwhelmed by the force of her personality. He found himself compulsively following her until the night that he was picked up and questioned by the police who found him lurking on the city streets. Horrified by this incident he locked himself in his flat and spent his time resisting his impulses to find her and spy on her. The resistance made him exhausted, eventually beginning a cycle of periods of sodden sleep which alternated with periods of great panic and depression.

I assured Martin that all would be well and then concluded the session.

4/20/61 OBSERVATIONS My impression is that this is more than a case of romantic obsession. It is an obsession disproportionate to the cause.

I am reminded by the images that the patient employs of Church cases involving Spirit Possession. He is always thinking of her. She is always in his conscious thoughts. The pain draining him of his strength. The humiliation making him its prisoner. It is undoing him, murdering him, robbing him of his pride, his dreams, his pleasure, his accomplishments. This obsession is feeding on him like a clever, willful, parasitic being. He has somehow incorporated the persona of the woman into his superego in a way that is damaging him because it is *replacing his own identity*. Curious to observe this sort of thing happening.

4/21/61 This session was spent trying to identify the patient's fears. After hypnotic induction it was suggested that he place himself in the present moment and then report on his emotions. There was a period of calm and then he reported constriction of breath, tremors through the body, feelings of wrongdoing, a conviction that he must change his behavior. And then the thought of the woman and her voice in his head, her presence judging him, the need to find her, observe her, to use her as an example, to teach him how he should be living. "She knows the answer," he said. "She's subordinating me. I am becoming her. I'm talking like her. My handwriting has become like hers. Her dark humor... I keep seeing her eyes..."

At this point the patient became overwrought, and it became necessary to end the session.

4/22/61 Induced a hypnotic state, and asked: "Martin, what has started this terrible pain in your being?"

"My love for B\_\_\_\_," he answered after a pause. I then suggested to him that for the rest of our session all thought and memories that he had of B\_\_\_\_ would be forgotten and gone from his mind. The suggestion seemed to be successfully taken. His mood changed and seemed more "normal". He did at first calm remarkably but the calm deepened to a point of marble abnormality. Then he seemed to be inwardly resisting some type of force. The struggle seemed to exhaust him into another state of marblelike calm. I decided to terminate the hypnosis. Upon waking from trance he seemed more relaxed.

4/23/61 Induced trance state. Again I suggested a present in which there was no B\_\_\_\_. I said that he could speak to me, John, freely, dispassionately, objectively. He again expressed his feeling of being compelled. I reminded him that there was a time in his life when he had no such compulsion. I suggested that he return to that time. I placed him back into the past using hypnosis and he was gradually brought to the moment just before the compulsion began. I asked him where he was and what was he doing. He said that he was at his desk, looking over the research materials that he had brought back from LeRoi, Vermont. He said that he was reading a chapter of the book. Then he looked directly at me.

"There is a voice in my head, John," he said with dead, smiling, calm. "It controls me. It tells me to seek someone out."

"Someone whom?" asked Brother John.

"Someone who can instruct me as a Human Being."

He would say no more but after the session said that the hypnosis made him feel more relaxed.

4/24/61 I was sent to examine Martin's books in the hopes of discovering a possible cause for his

5/1/61 My path of thought leads to the contemplation of evil. I have a curiosity about a certain type of evil which is characterized by a coldly exploitative and analytical will. I wish to cast my eyes further than the realms of Good and Evil whose workings have always sufficed in the past to explain the world, and speculate on a force from another place; a force of great powers but whose motives are different from those Powers that we know. I am taken with the concept of an extreme distance and of a force that would be able to traverse it. From where am I getting these thoughts? They are unfolding like a story in my mind.

5/2/61 I fear that my thinking has become too fanciful. My new ideas represent deviation from Church teachings and this disturbs me. At the same time it flatters my vanity. I am increasingly taken with the idea of a new Enemy. I long to ask permission to speak with Brother A about this matter. He has been almost frighteningly clever in his treatises about the matter of evil in the universe. I fear though that he would consider my discourse foolish, or possibly coarse. He seems to possess deep knowledge, and is one of the more brilliant scholars in residence. He may have some answers for me but I am reluctant to approach him.

5/3/61 I re-read the Treatise on Evil by Brother A although I felt as soon as I had begun that it was the wrong thing to do. In two ways do I feel reminded of my faults these days: firstly, in the unexpected weakness of will that I have demonstrated lately; and second, in the unexpected strength of my own vanity. The brilliance of Brother A's work almost wounds me inasmuch as I am humbled by it. I feel humbled by the man as well, by the regard that others have for him and by how slight I am in comparison. A flaw of mine is that I cannot bear to be tested and found wanting. My surface of complacency becomes ripped away and I am humiliated by the enormity of my own vanity. *I must away.*

5/4/61 The work of Brother A draws me like heroin!

5/5/61 I have become increasingly depressed and nervous of late, and am filled with

humiliating longings and bizarre fears and concerns. I pray that the Father Superior will grant me the retreat. Some time spent in pure air in simple contemplation might release me from the snares of fear I feel shaking my spirit.

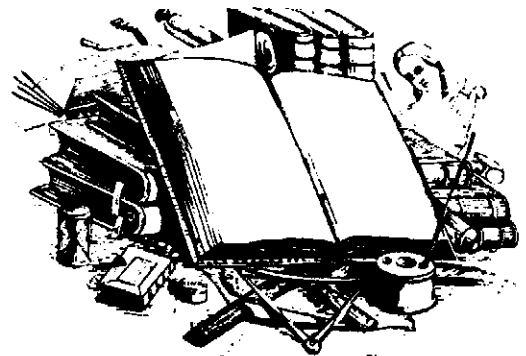
*From the pen of the Chronicler:*

John was given permission to spend five days in the Attleboro Hermitage but was reported as missing after two hours. Local police were called in and were unable to find him. Father Superior sent for Brother Jack Lattam of Dorchester Priory for assistance in the case. Jack had taught Brother John Valence at Sacred Heart Seminary and had recommended him to the Arkham parish. To help in the investigation Jack was given Brother John's notes.

CR

*The rest is a story for another day. Suffice it to say that Jack eventually did encounter the Book that has been spoken of. He did not, however, look into the pages thereof, which was fortunate, because the book was the Doppelganger, and the Book craved creating Doppelgangers and by not opening it Jack was spared letting loose the forces that did dwell there.*

-end-



That is Doppelganger. And now for RPG related questions: *what is the average loss of sanity points per hour for the characters in the story? Is Nyarlathotep really seducing the Director of Admissions at Arkham General in order to create a personality slave? Would you participate as an NPC in an LARP version of this*

story that deals with pain, heartbreak and the intemperate meddlings of beings from mind shatteringly antique and remote galaxies? Why does Evil invade from up above? Why do naive seekers of Truth and Knowledge (fools) fall in love?

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**Scott Ferrier:** What's this, Matey? If I say something nice about someone's scene they might say something nice about mine? Naw...By the way, I really love the briney atmosphere of AYE MATEY & look forward to more. As for your contest "What the Hell is an Interregnum?" I'm guessing that it is the period between Republican Administrations. :) (And, Peter, may I take this chance to wish you a successful, *long* run!). **Virgil Greene:** Ow! The travails of the Duck! V: When does a game become a Mind Game? Like an invitation to George and Martha's for an evening of Fun and Games? Hopefully you can apply what you learned in that game to other games. I liked your 'zine—lots of interesting, different, things. Thought "Quickening of the Week" was very funny. **George Phillis:** Saw a master page of "Who Slays Satan" lying on a table @ Peter's and was reading it with interest but didn't turn it over to continue for fear of spreading gray spotted blight. Looked forward to continuing it in IR and was not disappointed. **Mark Sabalauskas:** Funny 1970s M: tG cards. Liked Guide to Fronela. **F. Bob Mosdal:** Afraid the references in the review of ME v2.0 were a little over my head. Alt.captain.borg.borg.borg? :) **Collie Collier:** Don't you find that when you present your storyteller's story, your players immediately start panning it for clues? How do you deal with that sort of thing? **Dana Erlandsen:** The mention of the 12th century Spanish game really caught my attention since I had once developed a scenario using that time and place. I called the land "Tartessos" which was an old name for a region of Spain. Your French campaign character sketches were interesting and fun to read. I'd be curious to hear about how players use language in the game. **Peter Maranci:** In this sitting, I'd mainly like to compliment you on the graphic composition of your work in IR, which I think is

very expressive. An example: the 1st page of The Log That Flies #2 and the little tadpole jumping as if startled by the title. **David Hoberman:** I am immersed in a McLuhanesque present. I am enjoying it, presently, very much. I love your line (SK #8): "They were killers, liars, and thieves, but not without soul." **Curtis Taylor:** I also at one time worked a rotating shift and could ever afterwards understand, say, someone's preference for cornerless rooms. It is nice, though, to see the sun come up, every three weeks. **Douglas Jorenby:** Your clip art cracks me up. Also, was Almost Blue really that bad? I didn't buy it at the time reading that it was a Tribute to Country but then, when I was in the mood for something new, thought that maybe I had prejudged it unfairly.

## PARTING THOUGHTS.

Vis-a-vis the story. A word to the wise:

"The spirit that I have seen/May be a devil;  
and the devil hath power/T' assume a pleasing  
shape; yea, and perhaps/ Out of my weakness and  
my melancholy,/ As he is very potent with such  
spirits/ Abuses me to damn me." !

So Cheer The Hell Up!

'Til we meet again

-Leis

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# Strange Sands

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## Greetings from the West!

I met Pete in 1992, about a year after I moved to Boston from San Diego, and about the same time I met his roommate, Scott Ferrier. I'd been invited to an IFGS game in New York, and having never played in a live roleplaying game, thought I'd give it a try. I played a mage, and had such a fun time casting spells that I didn't have any left for the final battle with the nasties. I was killed, but not before jumped foolhardedly into combat. It all turned out to be a lot of fun, as well as a good introduction to local roleplayers.

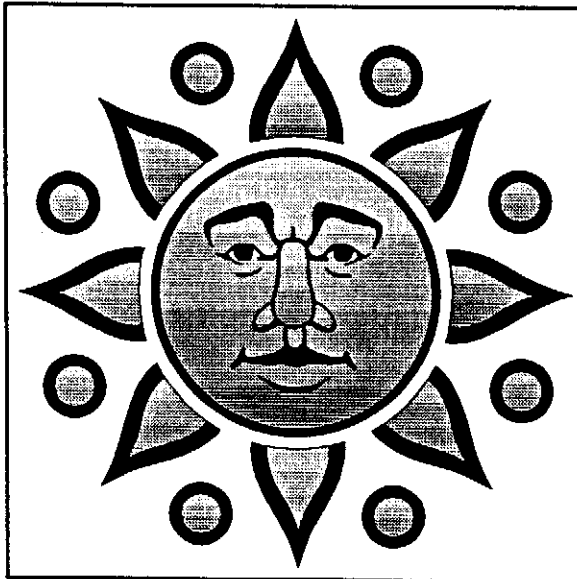
Since I've known Pete, he's been an avid APA writer and gamer, contributing regularly to the *Wild Hunt*. In that time he's asked a few times for me to contribute. And, well, to put it bluntly, I've been lazy. Also, deadlines tend to

scare the hell out of me. So what am I doing here now? Put it down to the arrival of spring, and an excessive need to, er, ramble aimlessly. In any case, here I am—pleased to meet you!

My friends usually call me Gil. 'Pili' happens to be a Samoan name, even though I have no Polynesian blood whatsoever. My stepdad moved from

Samoa to Los Angeles just in time to marry my mom and then trek off to Vietnam. My true dad is Hungarian and got his military service out of the way before I was born, rolling molotov cocktails under Soviet tanks before escaping to the U.S. My own life is (thankfully) less dramatic. I was an army brat from kindergarten through 3rd grade; we lived on an army base in

Germany after Mr. Pili returned from the front, and eventually we moved back to Escondido, California, just north of San Diego. I finished up high school



then moved again to California State University, Fresno, where I got my degree in English. Back to San Diego for a few years to work before the big move to the east coast, where I've made my fortune (okay, subsistence) at Blue Cross and Blue Shield for the past two years. I write some science fiction, as well as reviews for The Gamer magazine.

### *Flashing the Roleplaying Credentials*

Roleplaying started in high school with (what else?) AD&D. In college, I moved on to my current favorites, Harn, RuneQuest and Call of Cthulhu. Although I've dabbled in other systems, for the most part, I've stuck to those last three games; it seemed that whenever the temptation arose to switch to GURPS or Rolemaster, we'd find something new and interesting in the genre we were already playing.

I guess that's what attracted me to *Harn*. On the surface, it seems to be a rather mundane world—dirty and medieval, with a bit of Tolkien tossed in for good measure. But what I appreciate most about Harn is its subtlety. Robin Crosby gives just enough information to hint at "the truth," but always lets the referee decide just what to do with that information. There are stranger things going on just beneath the surface, and like David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, Harn is a world built on insinuation.

*RuneQuest*, on the other hand, is the furthest thing in the universe from

mundane, and yet it manages to be subtle in the same way that fables are. Its mythology affects the "real" world, and yet loud, epic events (a giant baby floating in a cradle down river) tell a much deeper story. It would be a lot of work to attain a complete grasp of Glorantha, and yet, would I want to? The fact that I don't understand the dragonewt's motives or cannot foresee the plots of the Seven Mothers only adds to my interest in the world. This thinking seems to be common among most Gloranthans (except for, perhaps, the shiftily Lunars). The God Learners were guilty of solving the world's mysteries, and worse, exploiting them. They are no more.

Of course, *Call of Cthulhu* takes the theme one step further. It's a lot of fun to vicariously delve into What Man is Not Meant to Know, and pay the price. It's more fun to believe the world is stranger than it really is. God forbid we humans be condemned to total reality. For that, finally, is my reason for roleplaying: to offset the petty silliness at work, the paying of bills, and to visit friends. Roleplaying allows me to see the world in a new light, to find the magic in the mundane.

### *Dreamtime*

Dreams are an undiscovered resource in roleplaying. Whether it's a really strange dream while we're asleep or a daydream about ancient Egyptian temples, there's usually some meaning behind the vision, a sort of symbolic message that brings

## Strange Sands

meaning to events taking place during daylight.

Is roleplaying (actually, any form of art) simply an attempt to tap into the subconscious mind while we're still awake, to explore dream realms without fear of real consequences? Our group's best games came when, as a group, we managed to reach that same state we reach as we dream; where we fear the thing that's "out there," and yet are free to take action.

One of my favorite childhood dreams took place in a great forest. I was one of a group of kids who had become lost there, and as we wandered, we stumbled upon a thick stone wall, covered in vines. We worked together to climb over it, and when we stood atop it, we could see on the other side a tall house. It was, of course, occupied by a group of nasty witches. The rest of my dream had us scared out of our wits, but we managed to escape their clutches using guerilla tactics. Hansel and Gretel? A dozen or so Disney movies? The plot was well ingrained, and yet the dream resonated so powerfully that I have never forgotten it.

The symbols in our dreams can be put to good use in both fiction and roleplaying. Why did we all like *Star Wars* so much?



In Bill Moyer's interview with Joseph Campbell on PBS, Campbell talked about the way the movie tapped into that dream state in such a way that we could not help but watch in wonder. But simply throwing out a group of helter-skelter images doesn't work too well, barring exceptions such as *Alice in Wonderland*. For the most part, when we're conscious and awake, we need to have a context from which to view those images. In one campaign I ran, the group of adventurers formed based on images they'd received in their dreams; those images surfaced later when they were awake, and under strange circumstances. To have ignored them would have meant ignoring their own human nature. But dreams work much better if the GM has a good framework. The better idea he has of a character's hopes and fears, the better he can plan for meaningful dreams. It's also helpful to know something about the way dreams work.

I usually approach dreams from an emotional standpoint. That is to say, I can best understand what a dream is all about by reliving the emotion felt during different segments of the dream. In my Hansel and Gretel adventure, there was a real sense of mystery and wonder as we came across the ivy covered wall. Then fear when we encountered the witches, and finally elation as we beat them at their own game. It was all

about exploring the unknown and dealing with it. These messages are usually fairly obvious if we just stop to think about them for a minute. So often, though, I see people just shrug their shoulders, say "*that was weird*," and go on with their day. It's as if people, when they get older, turn their backs on that feeling of strangeness, somehow thinking that paying attention to the unusual will estrange them from normality. As a roleplayer, I crave those moments, and want to recreate them any time I'm in a game. When they don't surface, either as a result of failure to completely describe a scene or character, or an endless barrage of mind-numbing hack and slashing, roleplaying becomes more frustrating than fun. I get mad at myself when I don't do the job well.

Chaosium seems to have a good understanding of ways dreams can be used. The *Dreamlands* supplement for Call of Cthulhu is an great sourcebook for anyone who is thinking about using dreams in a campaign. The scenarios have characters start with simple forays into the land of dreams and progress on to full-blown R.E.M. adventures, where the goal is simply to wake up. The *Nightmare on Elm Street* movies are somewhat—okay, very—cheesy, but they have the right idea, too. The most striking characters, I thought, were in the *Dream Warriors* movie; one girl is trying to kick her drug addiction, and what Freddie does use to overcome her? In a recent campaign, as people rolled up their characters, I asked everyone to think of a "dark secret" and write a little

history around it. The secrets provided some dream ideas, and also made for interesting story hooks later in the campaign. The trick is to link the subconscious with the conscious.

### Brandon Lee's *The Crow*

I haven't been that crazy about alot of the goth movies that have surfaced in past years. Both *Batman* movies were big on atmosphere and thin on plot and character. It was easy to forgot both of them about 45 seconds after leaving the theater. A better comic style adaptation was the less well received *Dark Man*. In that movie, the protagonist's motivation was much more apparent, simply because the directors showed, *in detail*, his grim beginnings rather than through dreamy flashbacks. *Dark Man* was a better Batman than Batman. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* stayed a little longer only because it was more irritating—a hodge-podge of images straight out of an MTV video and patched together in the guise of a movie.

Now along comes *The Crow*—the darkest, most sinister of them all. I'll say right off that this movie really surprised me. On the surface, it's a straight revenge flick. Good guy and girlfriend get offed and he comes back from the dead to wipe the scum off the face of the planet. Yet there's an emotional center to this movie that's missing in the *Batman* movies, and even in *Dark Man*. The violence (yes, there's a lot of it) is offset by the basic humanity of Lee's character, and by the movie's simple

message. The Crow reaches for the romantic, but manages to keep from getting bogged down in it; a few well-placed lines of black humor keep things from getting too mushy or philosophical. Finally, watching Lee on the screen and knowing that he is no longer with us, lends a certain weighty eeriness of its own. A slow-motion shot of Lee contemplating his final destination is positively haunting.

### Interregnum #2

#### *The Log That Lies*

I always thought the notion of disbelieving an illusion was sort of silly. Since there wasn't much difference in the AD&D universe between reality and illusion anyway, it almost seemed academic. The idea of small, long term illusions is better than big, loud phantasmal dragons, etc., etc. I did like the idea of the illusory dungeon. However, you might want to have a handy escape route ready if you ever use it! :)

The Grey Company is a good solid beginning to a campaign. Starting things off is always the trickiest part, I think, and the common goal of holding down the fort is a good way to get PCs to trust one another. I saw another good example in a recent Stormbringer supplement, where PCs have an opportunity to buy an inn for a bargain price...

"Unchill" has a nice visual quality to it, and I had no trouble finding a plot. The end is a little rough (I would have liked to know more specifically what is happening), but otherwise it was vivid and engaging. Don't let anyone discourage you from writing. Most people won't even take the chance, so you're already doing more than the average Joe! :)

#### Session Notes #16

But the fact that there are so many AD&D modules out there to lead you by the nose should be an incentive to write something that is as different from that model as possible! One of the best canned modules I ever played was a Call of Cthulhu adventure wherein the basic situation was laid out and the characters given the barest of details. I would love to see something on the store shelf that was little more than story hooks. You're right, though. The game I'm in now is fairly predictable in terms of plot; what keeps me going is the uncertain path we will take to complete it and the unpredictable behavior of my companions.

## Strange Sands

### The Pen & Sword

Well, from going to RuneQuest Con and reading the RQ Daily, you know how much Gloranthan material you can find when you really look for it—more than you'll ever be able to read, let alone digest! Seems that everyone who plays the damned game has their own interpretation of the world and maybe ten or twenty (not counting good 'ol GS himself) who will fight to disagree with you! You're doing well, because you haven't been hit with the flamethrower...yet! :)

I always had a tough time visualizing Fronela. I keep thinking of knights and serfs, and this in turn leads me to think of medieval castles in England, lush green hills, etc., etc. But when I think of Glorantha, I almost always picture dusty Pavis. The Glorantha set doesn't say much, either. So what does this place *smell* like, anyway?

### Who Is John Gale?

Thanks for the *Strangers in Prax* info. I now know where my next \$18 will be spent.

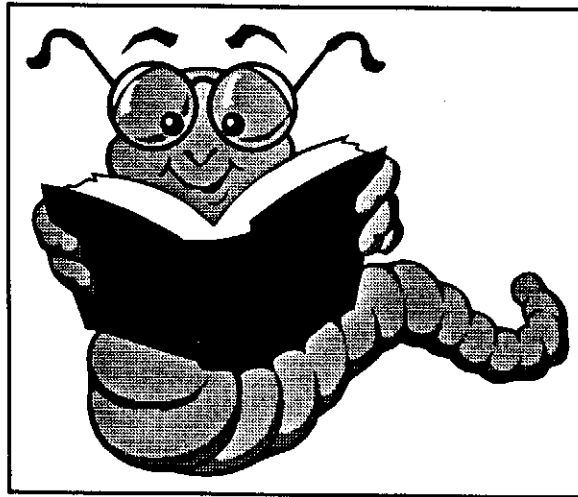
### The Slack Times

I was very interested at one point in devising a character generating program for my brother's Apple II, but never got too far. I suppose writing a program these days would be fairly easy. If it printed out a nice looking character sheet, then I'd be really impressed,

especially for those complicated, take the square root of your character's taste skill, systems.

Liked your review of *Millennium's End*. It sounds fairly interesting, but am not really sure what differentiates it from all the other stuff out there. I read recently that *Traveller* had been re-written with an emphasis on a

grim future. Now, there's *Underground*, *Dark Conspiracy* and a bunch others. I'd like to see an SF roleplaying game that's more tightly focused; *The Morrow Project* always sounded intriguing, simply because the characters know exactly what their goals are, yet are thrown completely into the dark. With the state of the world in ruins, and little information available, it's a great opportunity to explore without having to digest a ton of background material before playing.





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### *The Eight Track Mind*

This whole talk of reality brings Don Quixote to mind. Does living an illusion shelter us from reality, or does it destroy us when we realize the illusion is insubstantial? A healthy dose of both?

Lots of fun reading your thoughts on the current state of SFTV. Gotta give the highest ratings to *The X-Files*—intelligent, eerie stories. *Deep Space 9* is spotty and *Babylon 5* seems to be getting just a smidgen better. Just wish they'd actually use some real science-fiction in the *Star Trek* shows instead of giving us soap operas in space.

### *The Unnamed Zine*

Excellent article, very useful. One thing I like about *RuneQuest* is its attention to mythologies. Even if you don't know everything about the world's bazillion gods, you can start with a subjective legend about just a few, and it gives great incentive for adventure. One of the most difficult aspects of playing pre-modern characters is learning to see the world through your gods' eyes. You laid out some wonderful guidelines. I especially liked your comment regarding discovering the historical "truth." I always liked the idea of beginning a campaign with a set of characters who have a very narrow view of the world, then slowly (or not so slowly!) introducing them to harsh reality.

### *Refugee*

Wow, great story. You have a sense for detail, as well as a striking protagonist. I especially enjoyed Camilla's method of reasoning as she escapes. The Abbot was interesting, too; I'm still wondering why he was so cooperative, and what was in that philtre? The chase through the moors was exciting, and I loved the exchange with the Riddle Prince. Have you been published? Looking forward to more.

